



Time to Teach

Teacher attendance and time on task
in primary schools

Puntland, State of Somalia

Spogmai Akseer and Despina Karamperidou

November 2020

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Foreword

Teachers play an integral role in imparting knowledge to pupils. More than just conduits of information, they equip children with the academic and socio-emotional skills and the tools to analyse, problem solve and effectively use information – skills that are necessary to lead healthy and productive lives. However, many education systems in East and Southern Africa are failing to prepare, support, motivate, and manage their teachers.

Puntland, State of Somalia (hereafter, Puntland) has invested heavily in education and teacher development. Since 2012, the Government of Puntland has been progressively increasing spending on education, promising 1 per cent of GDP annually between 2017 and 2021. Yet, teacher absenteeism continues to be one of the most serious challenges hindering learning achievements in Puntland primary schools. While there are many valid reasons for a teacher to be away from the school and the classroom, some absences are clearly illegitimate, such as when teachers ‘moonlight’ (work elsewhere) when they should be teaching, or when teachers miss school for significant periods of time without clear justification for their leave. As a result, many children attending school still lack foundational literacy, numeracy, and the socio-emotional skills necessary to reach their full potential.

Ensuring teachers are on task is critical if Puntland is to meet its 2017-2019 national development priorities, which include enhanced education quality, access and equity, especially in rural and marginalized communities. Any hindrance to the development of adequate, reliable, and competent human capital has a negative relationship or a deteriorating effect on development. Absenteeism of teachers can have a negative impact on the entire school system by wasting investments and damaging school reputations. By lowering student attendance and achievement, teacher absenteeism can also cause much broader economic losses.

We hope the findings of this study will not be interpreted narrowly as criticism of teachers and other education stakeholders, but rather as a snapshot of Puntland’s primary education system.

We also hope the findings will help to tailor the future interventions of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the Teacher Service Commission, to ensure a competent and motivated teaching force, but also to increase the opportunities for children to learn at school and improve their opportunities in life.

The Research Team
UNICEF Innocenti

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
CEC	Community Education Committee
DEO	District Education Officer
DFID	UK Department for International Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EMIS	Education Information Management Systems
EFA	Education for All
ESA	East and Southern Africa
ESSP1	Education Sector Strategic Plan 2012-2016
ESSP2	Education Sector Strategic Plan 2017-2021
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GTEC	Garowe Teacher Education Centre
HML	Health Media Lab
IDI	In-Depth Interview
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IRB	Research and Ethics Institutional Review Board
IQS	Integrated Quranic Classes
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MoE&HE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
NA	North Africa
PDRC	Peace and Development Research Centre
PEPP	Puntland Education Policy Paper
PIE	Puntland Institute for Education
PNEB	Puntland National Examination Board
PSLE	Puntland Primary School Leaving Examination
REO	Regional Education Officer
TCA	Thematic Content Analysis
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
WCA	West and Central Africa

Executive summary

Overview

Teacher absenteeism constitutes a significant barrier to achieving national educational goals in many low- and middle-income countries, where teacher absence rates range from 3 to 27 per cent.¹ While there is no data available from Puntland, State of Somalia (hereafter Puntland) on teacher absenteeism trends, regional cases suggest this is a chronic problem facing many schools throughout Africa, with an average of 15 to 45 per cent of all primary school teachers absent from the classroom on any given day. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoE&HE) is beginning to increasingly prioritize the role of the teacher in the provision of effective time on task, and thus, has taken measures to deter teacher absenteeism. These efforts, however, focus mainly on absence from school and do not take into consideration when teachers are absent from the classroom (but present at school), when they arrive late or leave school early, or when teachers limit their time on task. Additionally, an analysis of existing policy gaps and policy-implementation gaps reveals that while Puntland has begun to prioritize the negative impact of teachers' absence on learning outcomes, there is still a need for further enhancement of implementing existing policies and developing additional measures to ensure teachers are on task.

The Time to Teach (TTT) study seeks to address this knowledge gap. Its primary objective is to identify factors affecting the various dimensions of primary school teacher attendance and to use this evidence to inform the design and implementation of teacher policies. Specifically, the study looks at four distinct dimensions of teacher attendance: (1) being in school; (2) being punctual (i.e. not arriving late/leaving early), (3) being in the classroom (while in school); and (4) spending sufficient time on task (while in the classroom).

TTT is a mixed-methods project, employing both qualitative and quantitative research tools. The study draws from national, system-wide, qualitative data collections and school observations, and a quantitative survey of 138 teachers working in 20 purposely selected primary schools.

Main findings

In line with the study's systems approach, findings regarding the determinants of various types of teacher absenteeism in Puntland are presented in this report based on the level of education system to which they most closely correspond, or the level at which they manifest most significantly.

How frequently are teachers absent?

In the TTT survey, teachers were queried on the average frequency with which they had been absent in various ways since the start of the January – December 2018 school yearⁱ and were asked to select one option from among the following five responses: never; a few times (less than three times); less than once a week; once a week; and more than once a week.

Ten per cent of surveyed teachers self-reported being absent from school at least once a week (since the start of the school year) while two per cent of teachers self-reported being more frequently absent, i.e. at a rate of more than once a week. Late arrivals and early departures were reported by 5 per cent of the teachers as occurring at least once a week. Limited time on task and absence from the classroom while at school were reported at 9 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively.

ⁱ Survey data were collected from September to October 2018 – i.e. approximately nine months into the 2018 school year.

However, there were gender variations with male teachers self-reporting higher instances of school absence (9 per cent), compared to female teachers (2 per cent). Likewise, there were rural, urban and peri-urban differences, with peri-urban teachers noting higher instances of weekly absences from school (6 per cent) and time on task (6 per cent), compared to rural schools (4 per cent and 3 per cent respectively), and none reported by urban teachers.

Why are teachers absent?

At the national level, lack of availability of teacher-training programmes affects teachers in the classroom because they lack the skills to manage and engage students and to effectively plan and deliver a lesson, especially the new curriculum outcomes. Additionally, low remuneration and frequent delays in collecting wages cause worry for many teachers, making it difficult for them to stay on task, or to attend to their classes while at school. Some teachers are regularly absent or late to school because they are engaged in alternative income-generating activities in order to meet their financial needs. Finally, there is concern among many head teachers and community representatives that the Ministry's lack of standardized processes for managing teachers makes it difficult to hold teachers accountable.

At the subnational level, school monitoring by local officials is not consistent and often focused mainly on engaging head teachers. Instances of inadequate teaching practises, including shortening of lesson duration, appear higher in schools where monitoring visits are not frequent. Teachers also feel less motivated when they do not receive feedback or support with their pedagogical practices. Additionally, school inspectors lack sanctioning authority and sometimes carry out similar tasks as the head teacher and Community Education Committee (CEC), causing confusion regarding roles and responsibilities. This lack of clarity regarding roles and not having the authority to sanction teachers affects teachers' perception of education officials and their overall sense of accountability towards their work.

At the community level, extreme weather conditions (rain, drought, heat and cold) cause teachers to be regularly late in the morning or leave school early, and to cancel or shorten classes. Poor classroom infrastructure limits teachers' time on task, and poor community infrastructure causes both teachers and students to be absent from school. Also, teachers who do not live close to the school find it difficult to attend on time in the morning due to lack of transportation. Nomadic teachers sometimes miss additional days from teaching so they can look after their livestock or travel to their homes, which are in a different district. Finally, there is variation across schools in how frequently CECs engage with schools, and in schools where CECs are very active, head teachers feel their authority is undermined, making it difficult to enforce measures against absenteeism.

At the school level, when head teachers do not monitor teachers' attendance frequently, or when they do not provide strong leadership, teachers appear to more frequently shorten their time on task, be absent from school or the classroom, and arrive late in the morning. Many teachers also miss scheduled classes or shorten their lessons due to lack of teaching and learning materials (TLMs), or engagement in non-teaching tasks. Additionally, when students are hungry or in poor health, teachers find it difficult to remain on task.

At the teacher level, health is a common cause of teachers being absent or why they struggle to remain on task or to be present in the classroom. Schools selected for this study do not have clear restrictions or guides for how long a teacher can be absent due to health, or how lessons can be provided during their absence to ensure students are on track. Another common reason given by teachers for missing school or leaving school early is personal or family needs. In particular, stress caused by insufficient salary makes it difficult for teachers to concentrate while teaching or arrive on time because they may have sought additional income-generating activities. Finally, some teachers appear to lack essential teaching skills, affecting their instructional time use.

What are the common determinants of teacher absenteeism across all levels and potential recommendations for policymaking?

Findings suggest that determinants of teacher absenteeism are often connected across the system and sectors. Therefore, potential solutions for addressing these barriers require a system- and sector-wide approach. A synthesis of key determinants of teacher absenteeism and potential policy recommendations are presented as follows:

- Insufficient availability of TLMs across all schools, particularly rural and peri-urban, result in frequent classroom absenteeism and limited time on task. Although the Ministry has prioritized the distribution of TLMs and development of WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) infrastructure, these efforts need to use a needs-based approach that prioritizes disadvantaged schools and includes short-term solutions (i.e. temporary teaching kits), as well as additional classroom and school facilities to help make classrooms conducive to teaching and learning.
- Lack of clarity on who is responsible for the direct monitoring and management of teachers affects their sense of accountability. This results in them being frequently absent from school and the classroom, late or engaging in poor instructional time use. There is a need therefore to clarify these roles and establish clear mechanisms for sanctioning absenteeism. This requires the formation of a comprehensive definition of teacher absenteeism that clarifies the conditions for acceptable and unacceptable forms of absence, and allocation of additional resources to support the head teacher in its implementation.
- Inadequacies in the provision of teachers' basic needs (such as inadequate salary and training) affects their capacity to be regularly present at school or in the classroom and their time on task. There is a need for short-term solutions so teachers' personal health and wellbeing does not compromise their teaching duties. Also, while training is essential, these opportunities should not interfere with teachers' attendance or instructional time use. Additional resources need to be allocated to address teachers' financial constraints, and training centres need to schedule their events at times when teachers are not expected in the classroom. These opportunities should also meet the needs and realities of teachers' classrooms, with a focus on classroom and time management and lesson planning.
- Additional administrative responsibilities and students' health increase teachers' workloads, resulting in insufficient time use in the classroom and absence from the classroom. There is a need to establish clear policies on the official responsibilities of teachers and to support the wellbeing of learners through feeding programmes and engaging parents.
- Insufficient inter-ministerial collaboration and coordination hinders the MoE&HE's efforts to achieve long-term and sustainable solutions for strengthening a teacher's role in the classroom and ensuring they use instructional time effectively. Efforts need to be made consistently across different sectors and aligned with national development goals in order to avoid overlapping. This requires regional government offices to identify challenges that require cross-ministerial support and working closely with their leadership to resolve these.

Section 1: Introduction

1.1. Context and study rationale

Teacher absenteeism wastes valuable financial resources, short-changes young students and is one of the most cumbersome obstacles on the path toward universal learning in developing countries.² Studies from across the developing world have found national averages of teacher absenteeism that range from 3 to 27 per cent.³ These national averages conceal even higher rates of absenteeism within countries and large variations in educational opportunities and outcomes, since educators tend to be more frequently absent in poorer and more remote communities and schools.⁴

Teacher absenteeism is particularly prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa. The Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) study by the World Bank found that between 15 and 45 per cent of all primary school teachers in seven sub-Saharan African countriesⁱⁱ were absent from school, and between 23 and 57 per cent were absent from class, on any given day.⁵ The same study estimated that, on average, the loss of teaching hours due to teacher absenteeism corresponded to a waste of approximately 46 cents for every dollar invested in education. This equates to an annual wastage of between 1 and 3 per cent of GDP.⁶ Afrobarometer data, drawn from 36 African countries,⁷ also indicate that teacher absenteeism contributes to unequal education outcomes, confirming a strong association between high levels of teacher absenteeism and the presence of marginalized and vulnerable groups.

In Puntland State of Somaliaⁱⁱⁱ, the development of primary education became standardized only recently after the establishment of the 2011 *Puntland Education Policy Paper*. This was followed by two strategic plans, the first of which was released in 2012 and the second in 2017. In these years, Puntland achieved several important strides, including: the creation of a harmonized national curriculum in 2015; national primary school leaving exam (PSLE); a centralized educational management system (EMIS); and finally, a promise to increase, by 1 per cent annually, the national budget for education. Demand for primary education also continues to be on the rise, and data from 2016 indicates even among traditionally marginalized communities (females, IDPs, nomads), primary enrolment is on the rise. These demands however, along with persistent financial constraints and a weakened centralized management process continue to pose a challenge for the Government in achieving its educational goals. A 2014 Monitoring Learning Achievements (MLA) study found only 22.4 per cent of grade 7 students were able to pass a literacy test and that at least 30 per cent of grade 7 students who had passed the examination were found to be 'functionally illiterate'.

Although there is no data available from Puntland on teacher absenteeism trends, regional cases suggest this is a chronic problem facing many schools throughout Africa. The Ministry is beginning to make stronger connections between the role of the teacher and achieving educational goals. It has invested in providing additional training for in-service teachers, established a centralized system for fast and efficient remuneration dispersion (ready to be used when funds become available for the Government to cover teacher salaries), and provided additional support to stakeholders like the CEC and the head teacher so they can properly monitor and manage teachers and their performance. There are also some efforts to encourage and motivate teachers about their work and to ensure that processes for accountability are clearer. However, teacher absenteeism is mainly understood as absence from school for a significant period or if a teacher leaves their job for more than 14 days without informing their superiors. It does not take into consideration the impact of when teachers are late or leave school early during school hours, when they are absent from the classroom while at school, or when they reduce their time on task.

ii Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda.

iii Although Puntland State of Somalia is the name officially recognized by the UN, the name 'Puntland' is used in the remainder of the report.

1.2. Objectives

Policy makers and education stakeholders in other African countries are becoming increasingly aware of the negative consequences of teacher absenteeism and have recently taken legislative action against it. It is also beginning to receive attention from the Puntland Government as the state strengthens its overall efforts to increase access, equity, quality and efficiency of education. However, the evidence base on how policies and practices — at various level of the education system — influence different types of absenteeism (school, classroom, and so on), remains limited. This lack of evidence contributes to difficulties in designing effective teacher-management policies to increase teacher motivations and opportunities to teach and to difficulties in implementing effective school governance reforms.⁸

The principal objective of the Time to Teach (TTT) study is to generate and collate empirical evidence on the various types and determinants of primary school teacher absenteeism in the country and to provide practical recommendations for improving teacher attendance rates. The study seeks to offer critical insights on factors at different levels of the education system that influence teacher attendance and to assist the policy and programmatic work of the MoE&HE, Garowe Teacher Education College (GTEC) and UNICEF Somalia.

More specifically, the study aims to:

- Understand the various forms of primary school teacher absenteeism (e.g., absence from school, classroom, teaching, etc) and assess their prevalence in different regions, types of schools (e.g., public/private) and settings (e.g., rural/urban).
- Explore the issue of teacher absenteeism from a systemic perspective and to identify factors at different levels of the education system (national, sub-national, community, school, and teacher) that affect teacher attendance, as well as teachers' capacity and motivation to teach up to standards.
- Detect gaps in teacher policy and policy implementation linked to identified determinants of absenteeism and barriers to higher teacher-attendance rates.
- Identify promising practices and provide actionable policy recommendations on increasing teachers' time on task as a means of improving learners' academic performance.
- Increase awareness among national education policy makers, international organizations and donors supporting education on the importance of well-designed teacher policies and the integration of the issue of teacher attendance into national education strategies, programmes and policy discussions.

1.3. Data and methods

TTT is a mixed-methods project, that employs both qualitative and quantitative research tools. The study takes a systems approach toward explaining teacher absenteeism and examines the relevance of factors at various levels of the education system, including the national-, sub-national-, community-, school-, and individual teacher-levels. The study also evaluates whether factors outside of the education system have an important role to play in determining teacher attendance, and if so, what that role is.

In total, 20 primary schools were purposely selected based on the following four criteria: location (region/county), governance (public or private), rurality (rural or urban) and performance (high or low). At each school, in-depth interviews (IDIs) were carried out with the head teacher, three teachers and a member of the school management board. A focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with students and a teacher survey was administered to all teachers who were present on the day of the (pre-announced) visit. National and sub-national education officers, in charge of teacher monitoring and management were also interviewed. In total, 390 individuals participated in the study.

1.4. Section organization

This report is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a short overview of Puntland's primary education system and teacher policies. It also reviews existing literature on the drivers of teacher absenteeism in the country and highlights their limitations. Section 3 presents the methodology of the study and discusses issues of sampling, instruments development, data collection, and data analysis. Key findings are presented in Section 4. Section 5 summarizes challenges teachers in Puntland face and highlights how these might reinforce different types of absenteeism. This section also includes a list of related policy gaps and policy implementation gaps for each key finding. Finally, Section 6 presents a list of policy recommendations that address key findings from this study.

Section 2: Country context

2.1. Overview of Puntland

Puntland is a semi-autonomous region of Somalia, officially known as the Puntland Government of Somalia. It is in the north-eastern part of Somalia and shares borders with Ethiopia in the southwest, Somaliland to the west, the Gulf of Aden to the north, the Indian Ocean in the southeast and the central Galmudug region of Somalia to the south.⁹ Somali language is the official language of Puntland, and Islam is its main religion. Puntland consists of nine regions, which include: Nugaal (where Puntland's capital city of Garowe is located), Bari, Mudug, Sanaag, Sool, Guardafui, Ayn, Hayland and Karkaar. These regions are decentralized and while they are tasked with implementing national policies, they are also required to develop local approaches and interventions to their regional needs.¹⁰

Puntland was established as a semi-autonomous government in 1998 after the outbreak of the Somalia Civil War in 1991.¹¹ It has a population of approximately 3.9 million, the vast majority of whom are nomads and pastoralists, who account for 60 per cent of the total population. The Government relies heavily on livestock, estimated to account for 60-80 per cent of total GDP and export earnings.¹² With a semi-desert climate, Puntland is regularly affected by difficult weather conditions, including drought, hindering the state's development and progress.¹³ In 2017, Puntland experienced one of the worst droughts in its history, causing extreme shortages of food and water and resulting in displacement.¹⁴ Drought often forces many families to move to other regions and districts in search of water and pasture.¹⁵ In its 2017 Development Plan, Puntland Government said the entire state was in desperate condition due to shortage of water from lack of seasonal rains.¹⁶

Like the rest of Somalia, Puntland also relies heavily on international aid, with UNICEF being one of its key development partners in the education sector.¹⁷ While Puntland faces many obstacles, it has been successful in providing leadership and oversight in the coordination of international projects in Puntland, evidenced recently through the Global Partnership for Education's decision to extend its educational project¹⁸ — after the successful completion of its 2013-2016 programme.¹⁹ Outside of education, Puntland Government has also made other progress, including in the establishment of basic political and administrative institutions, strengthening its provision of social services, increasing its engagement with the private sector and finally, enhancing its relation with the community. It is due to such gains that the Government describes its political situation as one that is no longer in a state of emergency, but rather as moving towards long-term peace and sustainable development.²⁰ This is also noticeable through the state's increasing support and commitment towards education, which is expected to receive 11 per cent of the national budget by 2021, a 56 per cent increase from the 7 per cent allocated in 2017.²¹

The Government has established its ongoing support for educational development through the provision of several educational policies and reforms in order to provide accessible, equitable, and quality education to all its citizens. Yet, despite their commitment, there are ongoing concerns for the Government that hinder its efforts to make education equitable, accessible and in line with national education standards. These are discussed further below through an overview of the primary education system in Puntland (its development, structure and governance) and an examination of its policies related to management of teachers, particularly around teacher absenteeism.

2.2. Puntland's primary education system

2.2.1. History and development

Years of civil war and unrest have directly affected the development and progress of education in Puntland. Educational policies and plans in the past were often fragmented or developed by external organizations with little input from government. Over the years, the Ministry has strived to introduce several education policies and reforms in order to improve education and ensure greater oversight and leadership over its development.

In 2005, the Puntland government released the *Puntland Education Policy Paper* (PEPP), which formalized the establishment of a long-term development plan for education with a focus on policy priorities and sector reforms. Some of the key objectives for developing PEPP included: a recognition that education was instrumental in nation building and social reconstruction, that it was vital for improving quality of life and finally, that education could be instrumental in redressing inequities caused by years of conflict.²² Along with PEPP, the Puntland Education Act provides a national (parliamentary-level) regulatory process for the holistic development of education.²³ These two documents formed the basis on which the first Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP1) was developed for the period 2012-2016.²⁴ ESSP1 served as a 'road map' for the Ministry to move away from its heavy reliance on external donors, towards sustainable, long-term and short-term Ministry-led initiatives in the provision of accessible and equitable education. In this plan, the development of primary education is described as being of "paramount priority" reflecting not only Puntland's national educational goals, but also its commitment toward international efforts, through an alignment with educational goals of *Education for All* (EFA) and *Millennium Development Goals* (MDG). ESSP1's vision for primary education is described as guaranteeing "universal provision and progressively increased participation in a broad, enriching and learner-centred curriculum that encompasses spiritual, cultural and intellectual values and adaptive attitudes to life based on Islamic principles and ethics".²⁵

In 2017, Puntland released its second strategic plan (ESSP2) for the 2017-2021 period. ESSP2 lists three priorities for education: the first is an increase in access and equity, followed by improvements in quality and learning outcomes and finally, the enhancement of the overall efficiency of the sector. Like ESSP1, ESSP2 also prioritizes linking its educational development activities to international trends so that they are in line with commonly accepted learning standards. For example, ESSP2 aligns its key objectives to those of the 2030 Agenda for *Sustainable Development Goal* (SDG) 4 (inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning), Goal 5 (gender equality) and finally, Goal 16 (promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies).²⁶ The Ministry has also been working towards the decentralization of education, as per Puntland's national decentralization policy.²⁷ As part of its national decentralization goals, ESSP2 describes educational provision and oversight as a shared responsibility between various stakeholders (CEC, private sector, local government officials and international partners).

2.2.2. Structure

The education system in Puntland is described as a 2-4-4-4 system, whereby two years are comprised of early childhood education (ECE), followed by four years of lower primary (grades 1-4) and four years of upper primary (grades 5-8) and finally, four years of secondary (which includes grades 9-12). Both Alternative Basic Education (ABE) and Integrated Quranic Schools (IQS) are considered important components of primary and ECE levels: IQS are considered primary schools in many parts of Puntland and are thus included in most governmental and international organizations' analyses of primary education (see *Figure 1*).

Figure 1: Puntland education structure

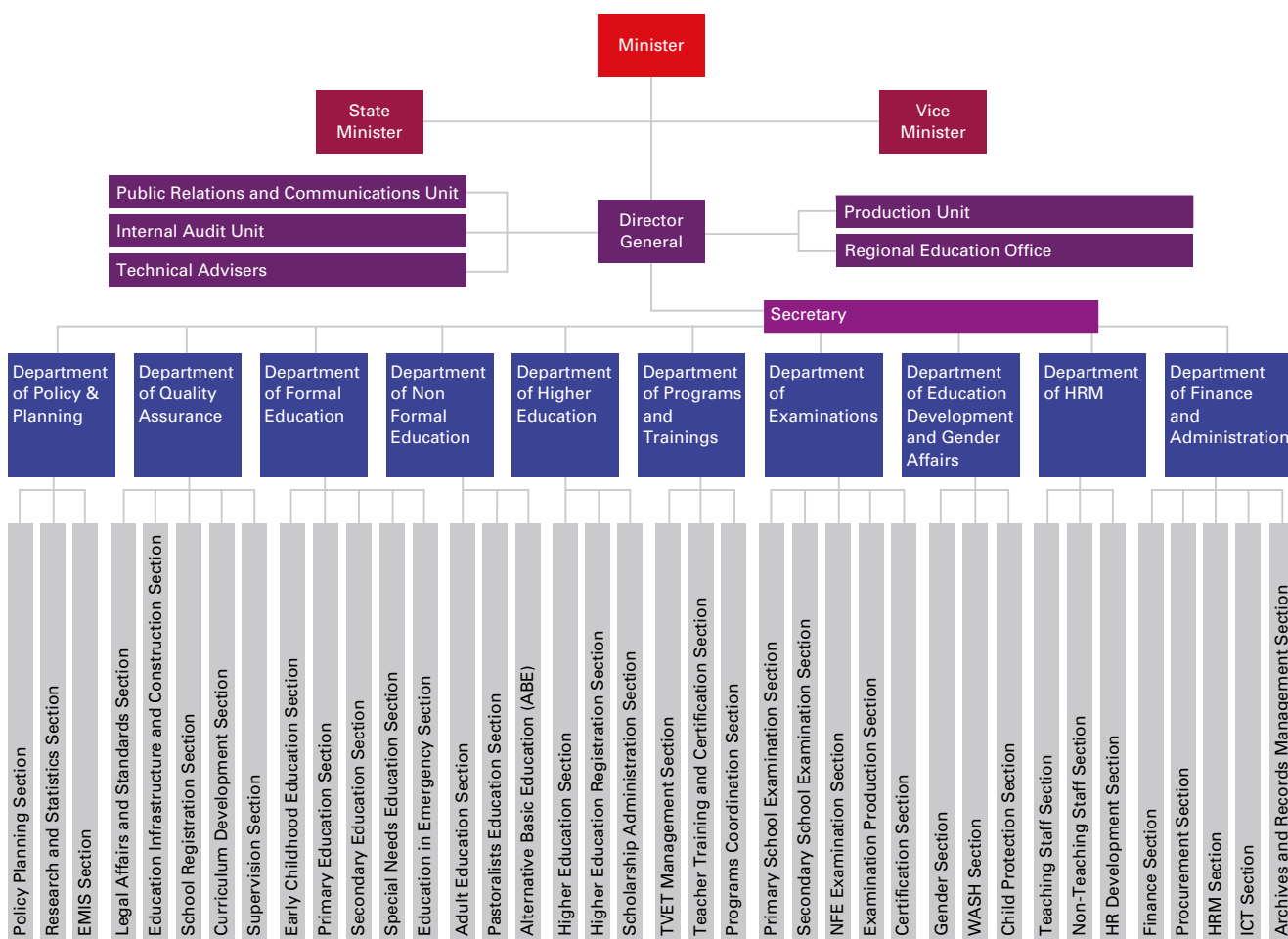


Source: Adapted from Education Statistics Yearbook 2015/2016²⁸

2.2.3. Governance

The MoE&HE is overseen by a minister, who is assisted by a vice-minister, in making sure the Ministry's activities are in line with national government policy (see Figure 2). The Director-General is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Ministry and has significant operational oversight. The Directorate of Quality Assurance (in charge of curriculum implementation, standards and quality assurance), Human Resources (responsible for the management and professional development of Ministry staff at the Ministry and regional/district levels) and Regional Education Officials (responsible for regional teaching and learning supervision and training) report directly to the Director-General.²⁹

Figure 2: Puntland education system governance



Source: Based on notes received from MoE&HE government official

Like the regional education officers (REOs), the district education officers (DEOs) share similar responsibilities, overseeing and inspecting all schools in their relevant districts and reporting to the REOs. The CECs include parents, teachers and other members of the local community. They work with the head teacher as well as the DEOs in their communities in order to provide material and financial support and oversight to schools and teachers. Finally, head teachers are responsible for daily oversight of teachers, sometimes in collaboration with DEOs and/or CECs.

2.3. Educational priorities and challenges

2.3.1. Quality

Providing education that is in line with international standards, and one that also reflects the cultural and social values of Puntland continues to be a key focus of the Ministry. The focus on learning outcomes is especially important to the Ministry as its 2016 sector analysis found many learners in Puntland were performing below international, as well as national, learning standards.³⁰ The analysis noted 30 per cent of all grade 7 students who completed the MLA assessment in 2014 were “functionally illiterate”. Moreover,

only 22.4 per cent of the grade 7 students were able to achieve at least 60 per cent or higher on the literacy tests.³¹ These findings point to the magnitude of the problem of ensuring learning outcomes are achieved in the classroom, and a need for additional measures to enhance teachers' instructional time use.

In 2015, the Ministry revised and updated its national curriculum in order to provide consistency and harmonization across all regions.³² Puntland did not have a national curriculum prior to these revisions, resulting in variation and discrepancies in what learners are expected to follow in the classroom across the regions. The Ministry has addressed this challenge by also developing new textbooks and teaching materials that accompany the revised curriculum. There are, however, ongoing challenges that make it difficult for the Ministry to distribute these materials to schools and put them in the hands of teachers. In ESSP2, the Ministry has presented a strategy to address this challenge by printing and distributing 10,000 textbooks annually between 2017 and 2021.³³ Recognizing its financial limitation however, the Ministry also plans to develop a 'minimum standards framework' that all students will be expected to achieve before moving on to a higher grade.³⁴ This would provide teachers with the option to choose alternative teaching sources, as long as they were able to still meet the expected learning outcomes for their grade.

2.3.2. Access

Primary education enrolment continues to increase annually despite the state's ongoing financial and material constraints. Table 1³⁵ shows enrolment of both male and female students has been steadily increasing. The table below also reveals the gross enrolment rate is slightly higher for female students at 8.8 per cent, in comparison to male students at 8.5 per cent. This suggests the enrolment of female students is on the rise even though only 45 per cent are enrolled in primary learning, compared to 55 per cent of boys. This increase however, declines as the female students move on to higher learning, with only 42.5 per cent enrolling in upper primary education. Moreover, while the annual increases in enrolment are a positive step forward, Puntland Government considers this slow, especially as its aim is to achieve 100 per cent gross enrolment ratio within the next few years.³⁶

Table 1: Primary education enrolment trends for 2011-2016

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
2011/12	46.0	37.0	41.0
2012/13	52.0	41.7	46.8
2013/14	62.0	49.0	55.6
2014/15	62.1	48.8	55.4
2015/16	63.8	51.8	57.9
Annual Average Growth Rate	8.5	8.8	9.0

Source: Modified from Education Statistics Yearbook 2015/2016

Regionally, it appears there are also disparities between rural and urban contexts. Table 2 demonstrates that enrolment is higher in urban areas at 58.6 per cent, compared to 41.1 per cent in rural areas. This is concerning for the Ministry because most of the population of Puntland is rural, yet they account for only 50 per cent of primary enrolment.³⁷ It is also important to point out that finding qualified teachers to teach in rural areas is an ongoing challenge for the Ministry. They have made some progress to alleviate this problem by coordinating with the GPE to provide training opportunities for female teachers who will be deployed to these regions.³⁸

Table 2: Urban and rural enrolment by region (including IQS) 2015-2016

Region	Urban			Rural			Total			% of Urban
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Ayn	1,425	1,296	2,721	1,610	1,182	2,792	3,035	2,478	5,513	49.4%
Bari	14,647	11,637	26,284	4,289	3,257	7,546	18,936	14,894	33,830	77.7%
Guardaafui	784	481	1,265	1,185	702	1,887	1,969	1,183	3,152	40.1%
Hayland	908	705	1,613	1,865	1,468	3,333	2,773	2,173	4,946	32.6%
Karkaar	5,339	4,479	9,818	2,755	2,246	5,001	8,094	6,725	14,819	66.3 %
Mudug	8,594	7,084	15,678	4,510	3,777	8,287	13,104	10,861	23,965	65.4%
Nugaal	5,834	4,968	10,802	8,560	6,571	15,131	14,394	11,539	25,933	41.7%
Sanaag	3,175	2,559	5,734	2,404	1,877	4,281	5,579	4,436	10,015	57.3%
Sool	4,196	3,112	7,308	5,099	4,071	9,170	9,295	7,183	16,478	44.4%
Total	44,902	36,321	81,223	32,277	25,151	57,428	77,179	61,472	138,651	58.6%

Source: Modified from Education Statistics Yearbook 2015/2016³⁹

2.3.3. Student fees

Most primary school children are required to pay school fees despite the Government's concerns these fees hinder enrolment and retention of students. The Ministry is unable to cover tuition costs at the moment, leaving teachers dependent on student fees for their salaries. Poor monitoring capacities of the Ministry also make it difficult to know what the extent of this dependency is across Puntland. The state currently lacks mechanisms for collecting relevant data on how much or how often students are able to provide fees to schools, and how these may impact teachers' salary acquisition.

Although there is no clear data on the exact cost of tuition, the Ministry's estimates suggest it ranges from \$15-\$95 per month in rural areas, to \$37-\$149 per month in urban regions. Table 3 shows a breakdown by region, revealing there are vast inconsistencies across regions, as well as across rural and urban schools within the same region. In Karkaar region for example, school fees in rural areas are almost double those in urban parts. Similarly, in Sool, rural tuition costs are estimated at \$12.83 per student, whereas in cities, it is reported to be almost eight times higher at \$103.50 on average per year. In Mudug on the other hand, rural and urban school fees are reported to be almost the same at \$75.38 and \$75, respectively. The variations in these estimates indicate schools are not following any standards for student fee rates, and that Puntland Government does not at the moment have a clear process for collecting data from schools in the region. The Ministry is aware however, that one of the main reasons children drop out of school (estimated to be an average of 20 per cent annually)⁴⁰, is due to parents' inability to cover school fees. This is especially concerning for teachers who are dependent on these funds and thus increases the likelihood of them not being paid sufficiently or on time.

Table 3: Average annual school fees as reported by schools in USD

Breakdown by region	Rural	Urban	Average	Breakdown by region	Rural	Urban	Average
Ayn	\$ 15.00	\$ 54.00	\$ 41.00	Mudug	\$ 75.38	\$ 75.00	\$ 75.21
Primary	\$ 15.00	\$ 54.00	\$ 24.75	Primary	\$ 55.80	\$ 75.00	\$ 66.27
NPE		0.00	0.00	NPE	\$ 63.00		\$ 63.00
Secondary		\$ 135.00	\$ 135.00	Secondary	\$ 130.50		\$ 130.50
Bari	\$ 63.00	\$ 167.00	\$ 132.33	Nugaal	\$ 78.00	\$ 74.70	\$ 76.82
Primary	\$ 94.50	\$ 149.25	\$ 131.00	Primary	\$ 81.00	\$ 74.70	\$ 78.14
NPE	0.00		0.00	NPE	0.00		0.00
Secondary		\$ 202.50	\$ 202.50	Secondary	\$ 108.00		\$ 108.00
Hayland	\$ 135.00	\$ 90.00	\$ 120.00	Sanaag	\$ 66.00	\$ 99.00	\$ 77.00
Primary	\$ 90.00	\$ 90.00	\$ 90.00	Primary	\$ 66.00	\$ 49.50	\$ 61.88
Secondary	\$ 180.00		\$ 180.00	Secondary		\$ 198.00	\$ 198.00
Karkeer	\$ 56.57	\$ 46.93	\$ 51.75	Sool	\$ 12.86	\$ 103.50	\$ 33.00
Primary	\$ 66.00	\$ 36.90	\$ 52.77	Primary	\$ 18.00	\$ 103.50	\$ 42.43
NPE	0.00	0.00	0.00	NPE	0.00		0.00
Secondary		\$ 144.00	\$ 144.00				

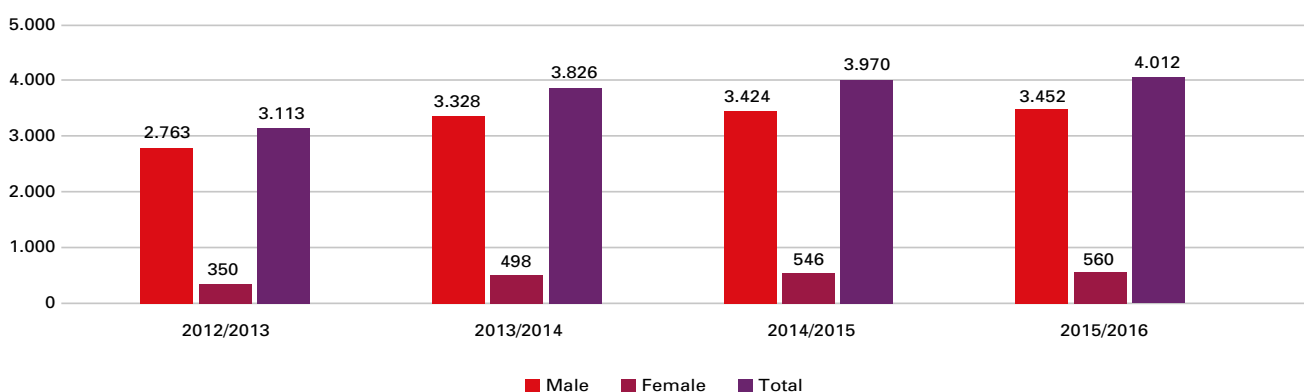
Source: modified from Education Statistics Yearbook 2015/2016⁴¹

Thus, while this brief examination of educational quality, access and equity presents some of the broader advances that have been made by the Puntland Government to improve primary education, as well as some of the challenges it continues to navigate through, it also shows that these trends directly impact teachers. As ESSP2 points out, teachers are also a key factor in how well students perform while at the school. It is important therefore to look specifically at the role of the primary school teacher in Puntland through an exploration of the policies and procedures that guide their activities, especially those that impact their teaching practises in the classroom.

2.4. Teachers in puntland

The role of the teacher is considered essential to ensuring learners are meeting their educational goals through their effective use of instructional time. Even before the release of Puntland’s official strategic planning for education, the Government included in the national PEPP⁴² the provision of qualified teachers as a key component of enhancing educational quality. Figure 3 shows the number of male and female teachers has been increasing over the years although significant gender gaps exist.

Figure 3: Primary teacher trends (including IQS) 2012-2016



Source: modified from Puntland Education Statistics 2015-2016⁴³

The MoE&HE proposed for the establishment of the Puntland Institute for Education (PIE) so there would be a designated section within the Ministry overseeing all aspects of teacher recruitment, training and management.⁴⁴ The Ministry has maintained its commitment towards enhancing the capacity of teachers, especially in ESSP2, through greater recognition for their needs and responsibilities. A number of these trends, including processes for recruitment, training and management, are discussed in detail below. In particular, the MoE&HE processes for monitoring teacher absenteeism are explored, in order to understand how it is currently addressed.

2.4.1. Teacher management policies

Teacher Recruitment

The Ministry released a recruitment guideline in 2018⁴⁵, which provides information about teacher recruitment for different stakeholders — mainly DEOs, REOs, CECs and head teachers. As part of its national decentralization initiative, the Ministry has also increased its support, through policy provisions that provide local stakeholders with guidance for carrying out educational responsibilities in a transparent and consistent manner. The recruitment guidelines, therefore, provide different stakeholders with a standard and transparent criterion to ensure teachers are hired fairly and based on merit. The Ministry continues to oversee this process at the national level by working towards attracting potential candidates, especially those representing marginalized communities. As part of its access and equity priority, the Ministry has dedicated Activity 3 in ESSP2, to ensuring teachers from disadvantaged groups are recruited and trained, primarily to work in rural areas where harsh living conditions and lower wages make recruitment an ongoing challenge.⁴⁶

Teacher Training

The main centre for teacher training in Puntland is the government-run Garowe Teacher Education College (GTEC), which provides both in-service and pre-service training programmes for primary- and secondary-level teachers. The Education Act defines a qualified teacher as “a person trained in a recognized teacher training college and awarded certificate of qualification of a teacher and of practice”.⁴⁷ The Ministry categorizes teachers based on the following training criteria:⁴⁸

- Qualified teacher: someone who has the basic academic requirements to teach but he or she has not yet undertaken any specific teacher training.
- Certified Teacher: a professional teacher who has also undertaken at least two years of teacher training.
- Unqualified Teacher: someone who may have experience in the classroom, but they are not academically qualified to teach, nor are they trained as teachers.

The demand for educational training centres is growing as Puntland continues to struggle with low teaching capacity of in-service teachers. A 2016 analysis of the education sector found primary school teachers achieved a 66 per cent average grade on national primary school examinations, even though the required passing grade is at least 75 per cent.⁴⁹ Also, of the 3,950 teachers that were registered in Puntland’s EMIS system, only 27 per cent were considered professionally trained.⁵⁰ The study also found most teachers did not meet the national minimum requirements in subject knowledge. In response, ESSP2 has proposed a ‘Practicing Teacher’s Certificate’, whereby 1,000 in-service teachers will receive additional training every year, while the plan is operational.⁵¹

Teacher salary

Teachers’ salaries are provided by a number of different stakeholders, including mainly the CEC, MoE&HE (who cover 21 per cent of all primary schoolteachers, and some non-government organizations).⁵² There are also a small number of teachers who do not receive any payments.⁵³ There is insufficient data available on how much teachers are paid in different regions. While the 2016 sector analysis report estimates primary teacher salary at an average of \$164.07 (see Table 4 for a breakdown by region), in practice, the average is considered to be significantly less. Remuneration amounts are generally considered inadequate and a key challenge for the recruitment and retention of teachers, especially in rural areas where the average range is between \$20 and \$50 per month.⁵⁴

Table 4: Salary of primary school teachers

Region	Salary of Primary School Teachers
Ayn	\$90.00
Bari	\$263.00
Hayland	\$60.00
Karkaar	\$172.50
Mudug	\$135.67
Nugaal	\$263.91
Sanaag	\$145.71
Sool	\$86.83
Primary Average	\$164.07

Source: modified from the Education Sector Analysis report⁵⁵

Also, while national budgetary allocations for education continue to be increased annually, a vast majority of these funds (85 per cent) are spent on central staffing costs, and the remaining 15 per cent on teacher salaries, curriculum materials and other costs related to education.⁵⁶ The Ministry has committed to increasing this amount by adding an additional 150 teachers to its payroll every year.⁵⁷ It has also taken steps to establish a salary payment framework, developed with the support of the GPE, so that provision of funds can be made quickly and efficiently once funds become available. The Ministry has also worked closely with international donors to facilitate the dispersion of additional financial incentives for teachers. For example, in 2014, the GPE provided \$60 each to 330 teachers, expanded this to 600 teachers in 2015 and finally, to 870 teachers in 2016 (see Table 5).

Table 5: GPE contribution to teacher salary payments (USD)

Academic Year/Data	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	
GPE Contribution to Teacher Salary Payments (USD)					
1	Number of Primary Teachers	4,173	4,703	5,173	5,643
2	Percentage of Teachers on MoE Payroll (%)	0	27	34	39
3	Number of Teachers on MoE Payroll (200 + 870) GPE teachers)	754	1284	1754	2224
4	Number of GPE Supported Teachers	0	330	600	870
5	Incentive Payments (x12 per year)	50.00	60.00	60.00	60.00
6	Total Annual Amount Required	0.00	237,600.00	432,000.00	626,400.00
Total GPE Contribution (USD)					1,296,000.00

Source: Modified from Global Partnership for Education Programme Document⁵⁸

While these contributions are important, inadequate and inconsistent remuneration disbursement continues to be a major hurdle affecting a teacher's overall quality of life. It is worth pointing out however, that the parents and community (through the CECs) play a significant role in providing teachers with financial compensation so that they can carry out their daily teaching responsibilities. Recognizing the integral role CECs hold in the financial wellbeing of teachers, the Ministry has allocated additional trainings for them in ESSP2 so the CECs' support to schools can be further effective, especially in managing and overseeing teachers' attendance and conduct in the classroom. This seems especially important as the community's existing financial support contributions account for the salaries of 70 per cent of all teachers in Puntland.⁵⁹

Teacher monitoring and assessment

In the Puntland Education Act, the monitoring and disciplining of teachers' conduct at schools is noted as the main responsibility of the minister of education, who carries out these duties through local government offices (REOs and DEOs) but can also designate other individuals to carry on these duties. In PEPP, these roles are clarified further so that local-level monitoring of schools and teachers is designated to the CEC. This is part of Puntland's efforts to promote standardization and enhance coordination of the education system, while also working in an overall national context of decentralization. In PEPP, subnational officials are responsible for observing educational quality at the school level, and also for providing CEC members with the backing and guidance to carry out their duties. Some of the responsibilities the CEC is designated with include:

- Developing constitutions that guide all matters related to school management from the organization of the timetables and school calendars to the disciplining of pupils and teachers.
- Participating in teacher recruitment and deployment, which among other things involves making decisions on their training and remuneration.
- Monitoring the extent to which schools are providing education of value to their children, and identifying appropriate remedial measures if necessary.
- Assessing the physical facilities of schools to ensure the learning environments are of high quality.

It is worth noting however, that while the CECs provide greater oversight and support to schools, these new responsibilities do not appear to include penalizing powers, especially for teachers who are disengaged from their teaching. Moreover, in the Education Act, disciplining of teachers is designated as the national government's responsibility. As the Government continues to move towards decentralization, further clarification is needed on the managing and implementing authority of the different structures of power so actions can be taken quickly and efficiently against teachers who neglect their punctuality and teaching responsibilities.

2.4.2. Teacher absenteeism

Many of the teacher-management processes and policies discussed thus far also have consequences on teachers' motivation to be present in the classroom or be on task. Poor and inadequate supply of qualified teachers, along with limited professional and financial support, were found to be common factors for high attrition according to a UNICEF report on out-of-school children in ESAR countries.⁶⁰ Similarly, a policy brief published by the Association for the Development of Education Africa (ADEA) distinguishes between two types of teacher absenteeism that commonly exist across the region, including in Somalia.⁶¹ These include authorized absenteeism (health, personal leave, administrative responsibilities, training, salary collection and official school visits) and unauthorized absenteeism (missing school without permission, arriving half an hour late or leaving early, alternative employment, teacher strikes). The brief points out, however, that even authorized absences are sometimes concerning as they are difficult to oversee and therefore can easily be misused. The report states that along with remuneration, poor working and living conditions, lack of resources, and weak monitoring systems are key factors that cause teachers to be absent. While Puntland is not included explicitly in the UNICEF report or the ADEA policy brief, it appears many of the challenges discussed in these reports are also prevalent in Puntland. Some of these are highlighted in ESSP2⁶², including:

- Below average teaching practices of teachers (including subject knowledge)
- Poor teacher attendance, professionalism and commitment^{iv}
- Weak monitoring capacity of educational officials at different educational levels (including national, subnational and local)
- Shortage of qualified teachers and poor commitment among those currently teaching
- Difficult living conditions (particularly in rural regions), hindering both teacher supply and motivation

The link between these challenges as factors that result in teacher absenteeism, however, is only implicitly applied. Neither ESSP1 or ESSP2 indicate clearly the causes of teacher absenteeism nor the various ways in which teachers can be missing from teaching, including poor punctuality, inconsistent presence in the classroom and below-standard engagement with students. In the Education Act, teacher absenteeism is recognized as a problem only in instances where teachers have been absent from school for long periods of time. The act identifies only the following forms of absenteeism as concerning and therefore requiring disciplining action:

- Desertion of duty: if a teacher deserts his/her duty without permission from their supervisor for a continuous 14 days
- Chronic absenteeism: if a teacher is on and off duty regularly without permission.⁶³

The act also does not clarify what kind of disciplining measures are to be taken in such cases, who would be responsible for overseeing these at the school level, and what processes can be followed to ensure they are dealt with in a manner that does not compromise students' learning achievements. The inclusion of only the above two forms of absenteeism also suggests the Ministry only advocates for action in extreme cases of absence and where significant loss of teaching time has already occurred. In both instances, the concern also appears to be mainly about whether or not teachers have received authorization for the leave, rather than the predicaments that even authorized absenteeism may pose for students' academic potential.

There is some indication however, that the Ministry is beginning to draw correlations between teacher absenteeism and achieving learning outcomes. In ESSP2 for example, (as part of its commitment to improve educational quality and learning outcomes), *Activity 6* is dedicated towards developing mechanisms that ensure teacher absenteeism, as well as other forms of unprofessionalism, are "effectively dealt with".⁶⁴ Although the plan does not provide additional details, *Activity 6* indicates an awareness of the relation between teacher absenteeism and learning outcomes. Similar to the Education Act, ESSP2 also does not provide additional information as to how the Ministry will undertake this task (i.e. who would be responsible and what procedures would need to be followed). There is an assumption in both documents that absenteeism occurs due to teachers' personal ethics and professionalism, rather than the possibility external factors may also hinder their capacity and motivation to carry out their duties. There is a significant need for the Ministry to (re)consider its notions of teacher absenteeism and also harmonize between its various policy strategies so that a comprehensive definition of absence is developed, and factors beyond the teacher's personal ethics are explored both as determinants of absenteeism, but also as sites for potential solutions.

The TTT study's multi-dimensional approach to teacher absenteeism, with its focus on various educational levels, thus provides a holistic approach to not only understanding the scope and variance of absenteeism in Puntland, but also provides context-specific causes and potential solutions for addressing the problem. For Puntland, a comprehensive and inclusive approach like the TTT is especially crucial as the Ministry continues to struggle with financial limitations and thus needs to develop solutions to ensure teachers are on task with the resources already available for its use.

iv ESSP2 does not provide additional information on how teachers' attendance is a challenge (if it is frequent absence, lateness or disengagement from their students or lessons)

Section 3: Methodology

3.1. Teacher absenteeism: A multidimensional concept

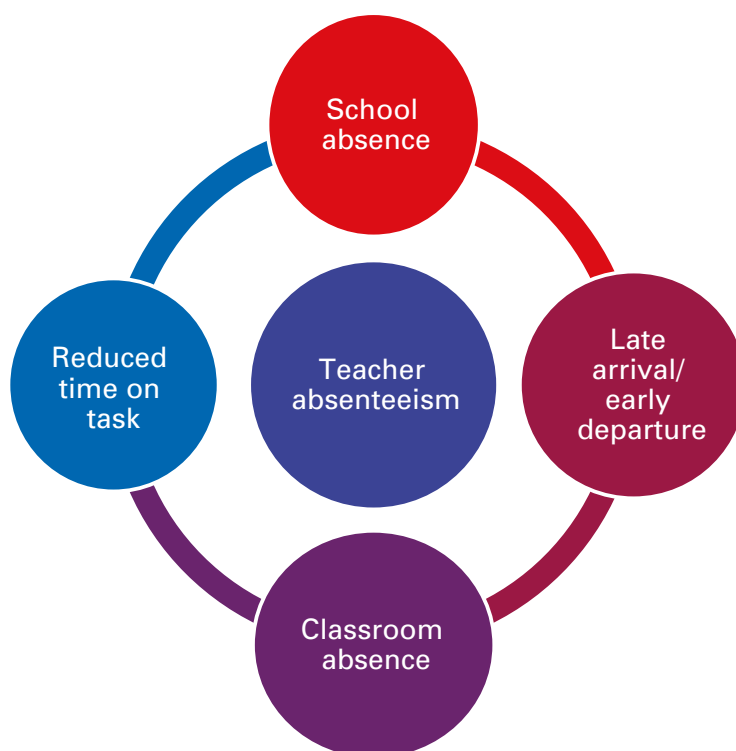
Policy makers and researchers have traditionally recognized one form of teacher absenteeism: absence of the teacher from school. Accordingly, in the past two decades, numerous programmes have been implemented globally to increase teacher school attendance as a means of improving student learning.⁶⁵

Several interventions aimed at improving teacher school attendance have been found to be successful — especially when they couple monitoring systems with rewards.⁶⁶ However, few studies have so far established an association between increased teacher school attendance and student achievements.⁶⁷ This is due to the fact that teacher attendance in school does not necessarily mean teachers are actually in the classroom teaching or, when they are teaching, that they spend the required time on task.⁶⁸ Consequently, the relationship between teacher school attendance, motivation to teach, and time on task needs to be further unpacked in order to better understand learning mechanisms and outcomes.

While the Time to Teach study does not focus explicitly on learning outcomes, in defining teacher absenteeism, the research team relied on the assumption that in order for learning to occur, a number of minimal conditions relating to the role of teachers in the learning process need to be fulfilled. Specifically, teachers have to be in school, in the classroom and actively teaching. This led to the development of a multi-dimensional concept for teacher absenteeism, illustrated in Figure 4. The concept is in line with contemporary understandings of absenteeism that look beyond school absence⁶⁹ and recognizes four distinct forms of teacher absence: (1) absence from school; (2) absence of punctuality (late arrival and/or early departure from school); (3) absence from the classroom (while in school); and (4) reduced time-on-task (while in the classroom).

A multi-dimensional definition of teacher absenteeism has not been widely used in education sector analysis where teacher-pupil ratio and share of qualified teachers have conventionally been used to represent educational inputs and human resources available for children. This is under the implicit assumption that employed teachers will be in school spending time on educational activities with students. A multi-dimensional definition of absenteeism can therefore help us classify and further unpack the various obstacles to effective learning and establish causal links between these obstacles and specific types of teacher absence. Factors that hinder teachers' presence in the school or classroom, their punctuality and overall time on task have direct consequences for learners and their academic progression. It is therefore imperative that the drivers of each type of absenteeism are identified and that corresponding policies to address the adverse effects of teacher absenteeism on learning are designed.

Figure 4: The multi-dimensional concept of teacher absenteeism



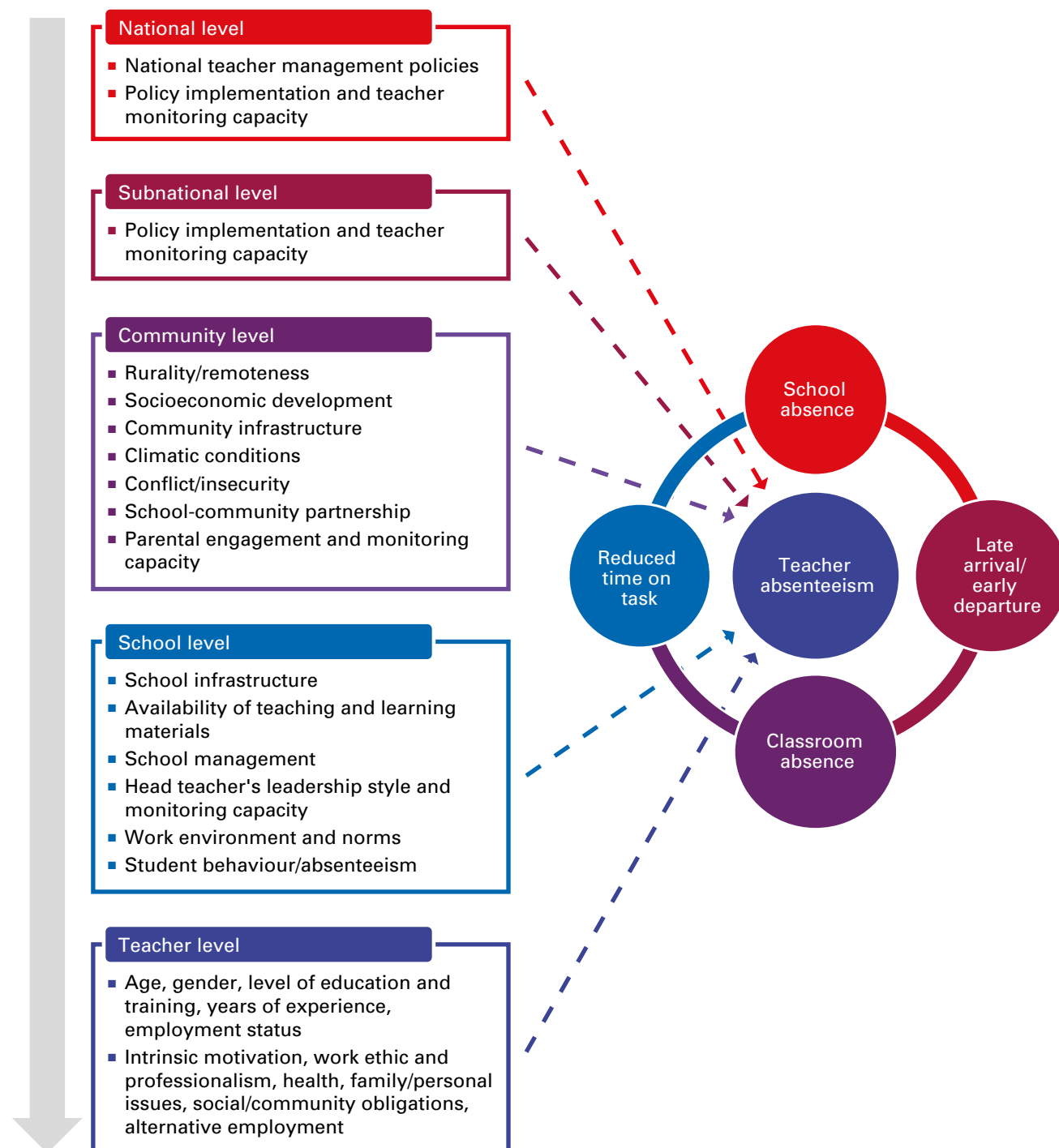
3.2. Understanding teacher absenteeism from a system's perspective

The determinants of teacher absenteeism are likely to be located at various levels of the education system. A systemic analytical framework is therefore needed to understand, first, how factors within the education system combine to force teachers to be absent in various ways, and second, which policies can holistically address chronic teacher absences.

Based on a review of existing conceptual models of general employee absenteeism and the literature on teacher absenteeism in particular, Guerrero et al. (2012, 2013)⁷⁰ suggested three sets of factors affecting teacher attendance: teacher-level variables, school-level variables, and community-level variables. Their model considers two groups of teacher-level variables: teachers' demographic factors, such as age, gender and level of education; and teachers' school-related factors, such as job satisfaction, opportunities for professional development, and work environment. School-level variables include organizational factors within the school, such as work norms, the head teacher's leadership style, but also teachers' administrative workload. Finally, community-level variables include remoteness, level of prosperity, and school-community partnerships.

The TTT project adopts Guerrero et al's (2012, 2013) explanatory model, with an important modification that consists of adding two further groups of variables (Figure 5). These variables operate on two additional levels of the education system, the 'national' and the 'sub-national'. These variables are included to measure the impact of national teacher-management policies and sub-national policy implementation on the dimensions of teacher absenteeism.

Figure 5: The TTT explanatory model

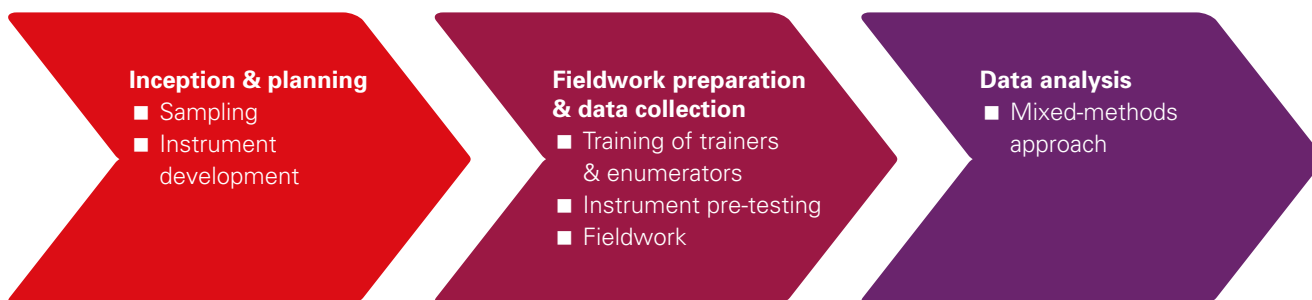


Source: Adaptation of the work of Guerrero et al. (2012): Guerrero, G., Leon, J., Zapata, M., Sugimaru, C., & Cueto, S. (2012). *What works to improve teacher attendance in developing countries?: A systematic review.*

3.3. Study implementation

The Time to Teach study was implemented in consultation with the MoE&HE along with support from UNICEF Somalia and Peace and Development Research Centre (PDRC), and involved three stages (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Stages of implementation



3.3.1. Sampling and instrument development

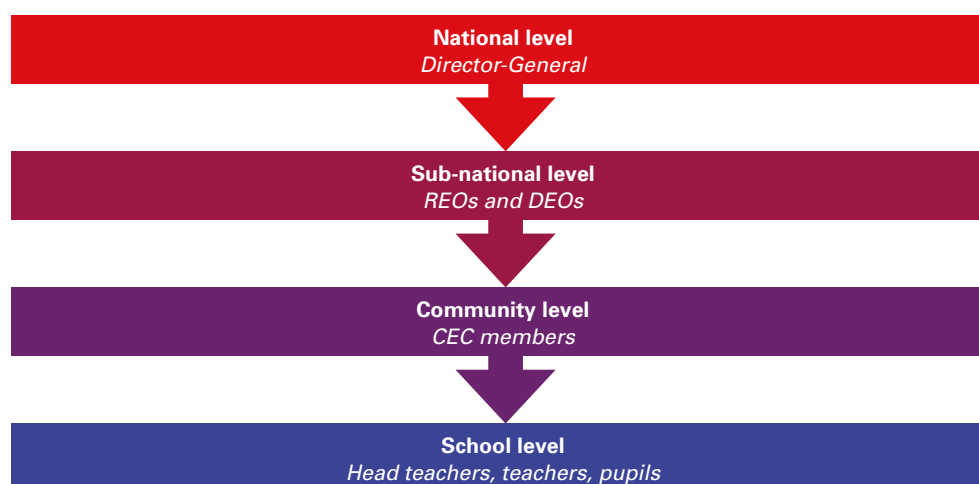
Following a series of consultation meetings with national partners in February 2018, the research team developed a sampling strategy and designed the instruments for primary data collection. School and respondent selection involved a combination of purposive, quota, and random sampling techniques. School selection was based on four criteria: location, rurality, governance, and performance. In the end, 20 schools were selected across all nine regions of Puntland and in 11 districts. The school sample included a mix of rural, urban and remote schools: private, public, community, IDP and refugee schools. The list of schools can be seen in Table 6. As the selected schools were assured complete confidentiality, their names are not mentioned in this report.

Table 6: Selected schools

Region	District	Number of Schools	Description
Bari	Bosaso	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Private/Urban ■ Community/Urban-Coastal
Guardafui	Bargaal	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public/Remote
Sanaag	Badhan	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public/Urban ■ Community/Rural
Karkaar	Gardo	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public/Urban ■ Refugee/Urban
Haylaan	Dhahar	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Community/Urban ■ Community/Rural
Nugaal	Eyl	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public/Remote-Coastal ■ Community/Rural
Ayn	Buhodle	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public/Urban ■ Community/Rural
Sool	Bocame	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public/Peri-Urban
Mudug	Galkacyo	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Community/Urban ■ Community/Urban
Mudug	Galdogob	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Community/Urban ■ Community/Conflict-Affected
Nugaal	Garowe	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Private/Urban ■ Community/Rural
Total Number of Schools		20	

In selecting respondents, the research team employed a number of criteria, including the respondents' unique position within the education system, expert knowledge and personal characteristics (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Study participants by system level



At the national level, the study targeted the Director-General (DG) whose portfolio was relevant to primary education and teacher management and monitoring. Respondents at the subnational level included regional education officers and district-level education officers who were familiar with school governance and teacher-management processes. Community respondents had an intimate knowledge of the selected schools and school staff, and in most cases served as members of the CEC. In each selected school, the study targeted the head teacher (or in his/her absence the deputy head teacher), three of the serving teachers and seven students. Teachers were selected on the basis of their individual characteristics, specifically age, gender, employment status, and years of teaching experience. The goal of diversifying the teacher sample was to capture a wide range of unique teacher experiences related to absenteeism, shaped, not only by the teachers' contextual circumstances, but also by their individual traits. Student selection was based on age and gender. In each school, both male and female students were included with a total of 140 students interviewed. To rule out selection bias and convenience sampling, student respondents were identified via lottery. Table 7 summarizes the number of participants.

To collect the data, the UNICEF Innocenti team designed a range of qualitative and quantitative tools, including in-depth interviews (IDIs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and a pen-and-paper survey. Different tools were used for each respondent group, reflecting the participants' expert knowledge and unique perspective. The pen-and-paper survey was administered to all teachers serving in the selected schools to supplement and triangulate teacher interview data.^v An observation tool was also designed to record the enumerators' observations on teacher absences, teacher-student interaction and teacher working relations during school visits.

Data-collection tools were shared with MoE&HE and PDRC for feedback and review and were refined accordingly. Tools were then translated from English to Somali and back-translated into English to ensure accuracy and consistency. The Innocenti team sought and received research-ethics approval for the Time to Teach instruments and fieldwork protocols by the Health Media Lab (HML) and the Institutional Review Board of the Office for Human Research Protections in the US Department of Health and Human Services Research.⁷¹

Table 7: Numbers of study participants

Respondent type and data collection method	Number of respondents
Head teachers (IDIs)	20
Teachers (IDIs)	60
Teachers (Pen-and-Paper survey)	138
Pupils (FGDs)	140
Community representatives (IDs)	20
MoE&HE National Officials (IDIs)	1
MoE&HE Regional Education Officers (IDIs)	5
MoE&HE District Education Officers (IDIs)	6
Total number of respondents	390

^v The teacher survey was self-administered. The profile of selected teachers can be found in the Appendix.

3.3.2. Fieldwork preparation and data collection

A training of trainers took place at UNICEF ESARO offices (Nairobi, Kenya) on 26 and 28 June 2018. The training was facilitated by Innocenti and involved representatives of MoE&HE, UNICEF Somalia, and the leader of the local data collection team (PDRC). The training entailed introduction of partners to the TTT study and its objectives, sampling frame, selection of the respondents, study protocols, as well as daily requisite field preparations/checklists and probable risks. Soon afterwards, on 15 September 2018, a three-day training of field enumerators took place in Garowe. Attendees included the project manager, FGD/IDI moderators and their assistants. These sessions were meant to familiarise the data-collection team with questionnaires. They were a replica of the training of trainers.

Following these trainings, a rapid field testing of the tools was undertaken to check the effectiveness of the translated documents and reconfirm their compatibility with the local context, re-estimate timing for each interview and focus group discussion, and to identify gaps or areas that required further improvement. The enumerators were organized into three groups, each led by a PDRC researcher. Three schools were selected in Garowe region, and arrangements were made with school management for the test survey exercise and to finalize visits. The teams then visited the schools to complete the pre-test on 20-22 September. A debrief meeting followed on 24 September 24, providing the team with an opportunity to share their experiences and lessons from the field testing. During this meeting, the team also familiarized itself with the final data-collection tools as approved by UNICEF. During the debrief meeting, the data-collection teams were issued with all the necessary study materials.

The data-collection team was deployed to the nine different regions and districts selected in this study from 26 September until 9 October 2018. The team comprised of three enumerators and a research lead from PDRC. In each district, the research team started the data collection by first holding a courtesy meeting with local authorities, education officials, and school administration to familiarize them with the study, and seek their support so that the team could gather data efficiently and within the allocated time.

3.3.3. Data analysis

Qualitative data

The multi-faceted data-generation strategy employed in Puntland facilitated the collection of a large amount of rich qualitative evidence, which ensured saturation and triangulation. The 132 interviews and FGDs that were conducted with seven different education system actors were transcribed word for word, resulting in more than 1,300 pages of transcribed materials. To systematically analyze and interpret this data, the research team employed thematic content analysis (TCA). While content analysis is a broad methodology that can be applied in various ways, the approach adopted to draft this report is closer to the interpretive analysis of latent content with the use of a codebook that comes from the deductive reading of existing literature and the inductive reading of the transcripts.⁷² Coding was done manually and assisted the organization of data into themes, and thereafter, the analysis of the data with the use of frequency measurement and interpretive methods.

Quantitative data

The 138 pen-to-paper teacher surveys from the 20 schools were cleaned and compiled. Information that could identify participants was removed. Tests were run in order to correlate teachers' responses with qualitative findings, to compare responses and to identify diversions or similarities. The main aim of the quantitative data analysis was to enrich the IDI and FGD data and to provide further insights across the 20 selected schools, while highlighting variations between regions and school types.

3.4. Limitations and challenges

Like all studies relying on self-reported data and conducted under time and budget constraints, TTT Puntland is not free of methodological limitations. The three most significant challenges likely to have emerged during data collection are presented below, along with mitigation strategies employed to ensure accurate data interpretation and minimize impact on findings and conclusions.

3.4.1. Response bias

Surveyors were trained to communicate the objectives of the study in a non-threatening manner and clarify any misconceptions regarding implications of voluntary participation. Surveyors also highlighted the principles of anonymity and confidentiality underpinning data collection and usage and stressed the right of participants to revoke consent and demand their testimonies be disregarded and destroyed. And yet, response bias may have been a significant challenge because absenteeism is a taboo subject. In some contexts, participants may have perceived the study as inquisitive or potentially threatening to their employment status. Consequently, it is unclear how truthfully teachers responded to questions around the nature and frequency of their absences and the role of the head teacher in providing leadership and instructional support due to concerns that it may affect their performance evaluations. Similarly, it is difficult to assess how honestly head teachers answered questions around subnational officials' efforts to enhance educational development because head teachers were often engaged more closely and directly with these individuals than teachers or community representatives. Under these conditions, three types of response bias seem especially likely: selective memory, i.e. remembering or not remembering experiences or events; telescoping, i.e. recalling events that occurred at one time as if they occurred at another time; and downplaying, i.e. representing outcomes or events as less significant than is actually suggested from other data. These potential limitations are mentioned in reporting of findings and have been taken into consideration when interpreting data. Systematic data triangulation was also undertaken across multiple sources to ensure the relevance and reliability of findings.

3.4.2. Selection bias

Selection bias may have also been an issue. The selection of interviewed teachers was based on a set of pre-determined criteria and was performed randomly among teachers sharing the same characteristics. However, it was limited to the teachers who were in school on the day of the visit. Additionally, the teacher survey was administered only to present teachers. This means that some of the frequently absent teachers may not have been interviewed or surveyed. To pre-empt this problem, none of the school visits was unannounced and teachers were informed about them well in advance. However, this does not exclude the possibility of built-in bias among those who eventually participated in the study.

3.4.3. Representativeness of survey data

Finally, the research team recognizes that due to the small size of the TTT survey sample, it is difficult to draw statistically significant conclusions, make generalizable claims and ensure the internal and external validity of quantitative findings. The TTT survey data can only provide a snapshot of issues surrounding teacher absenteeism in selected schools rather than a comprehensive view of the situation across all schools in Puntland. For this reason, the majority of findings reported in subsequent chapters depend on the systematic analysis of qualitative data for which saturation has been achieved.

Section 4: Analysis and findings

How frequently are teachers absent?

An exploration of Puntland's teacher-management policies in Section 2 revealed the Ministry had made some efforts to address teacher absenteeism and increased its awareness of the important role teachers attendance played in the provision of effective teaching time use in the classroom. It also became evident however, that teacher absenteeism was understood mainly as pervasive absence from school and as a consequence of teachers' personal lack of professionalism or motivation.

The TTT's multi-dimensional approach to defining absenteeism, along with an exploration of determinants by educational system provides a comprehensive platform for examining more holistically how absenteeism affects schooling in Puntland, and at which system level.

Figure 8 reveals that 5-10 per cent of teachers who took the TTT survey self-reported being frequently absent (i.e. at least once a week) in various ways (from school, classroom, arriving late/leaving early, and limiting their time on task). However, as illustrated in Figure 9, there are significant gender variations, with male teachers reporting higher instances of weekly absences than their female counterparts. School absence for instance is reported by 9 per cent of male teachers, compared to only 2 per cent of female. Similar differences are evident for classroom absences and limited time on task. Likewise, the TTT survey data (Figure 10) points to differences between rural, urban and peri-urban schools, with peri-urban teachers noting higher instances of weekly absences from school and time on task, compared to absence from the classroom which is reported by 6 per cent of rural teachers, 3 per cent of peri-urban and only 1 per cent of urban teachers; absence from school and limited time on task is not reported by urban teachers.

Figure 8: Percentage of teachers who reported being absent, by form and frequency of absence

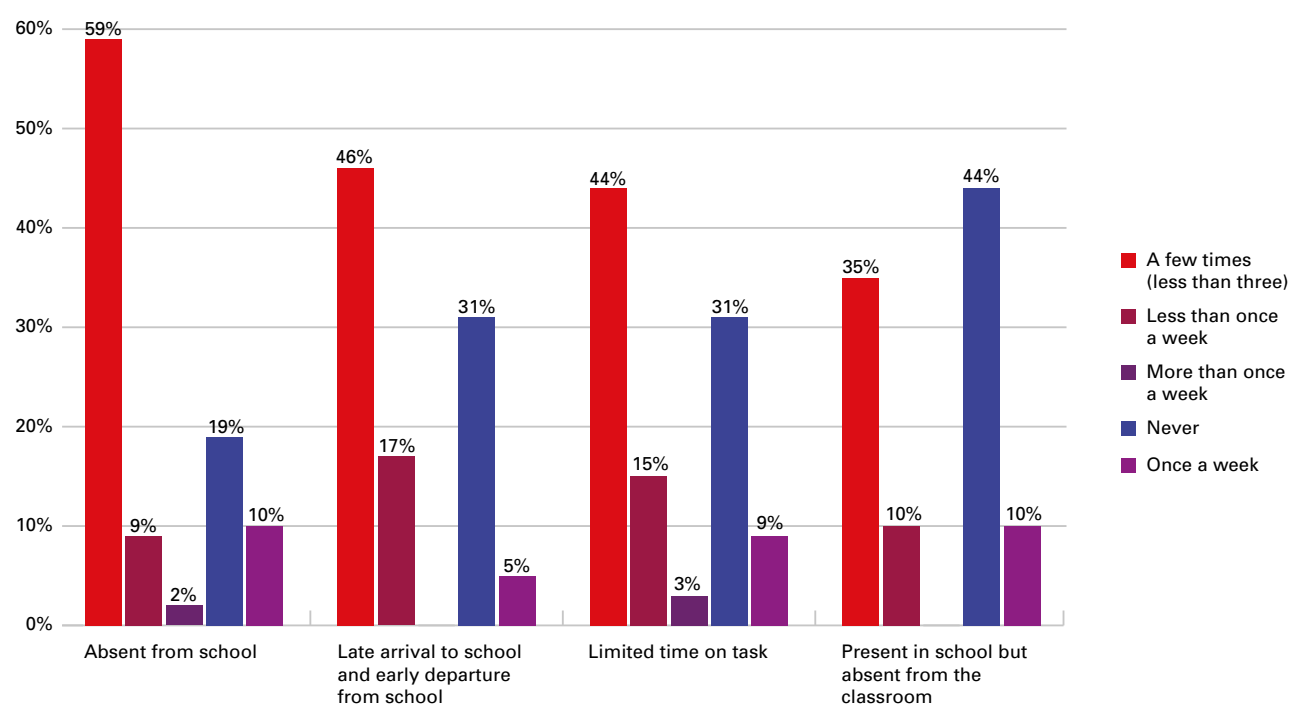


Figure 9: Frequency of teacher absenteeism for ‘once a week’ absences by gender

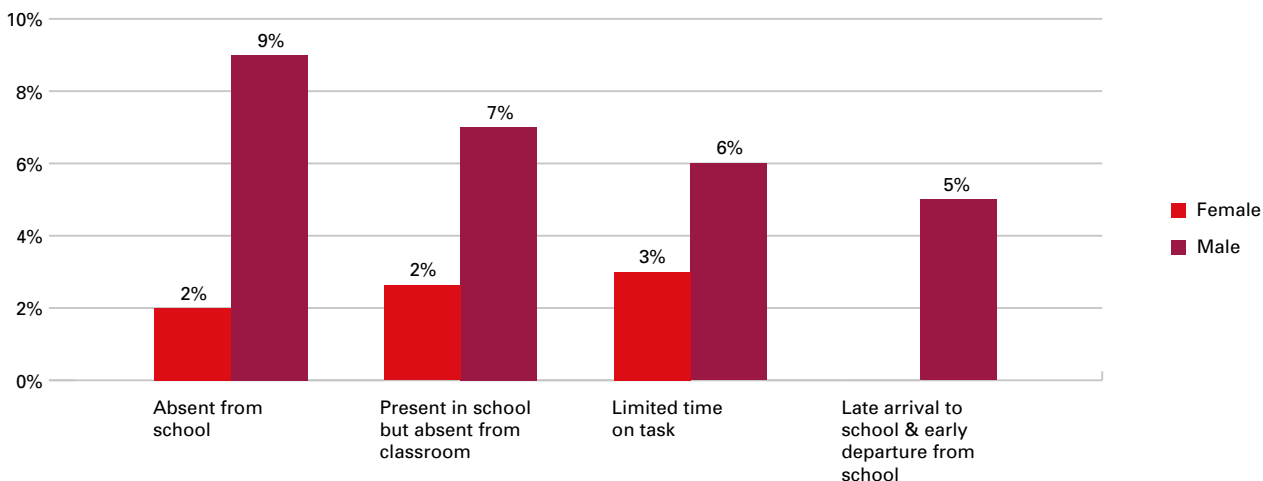
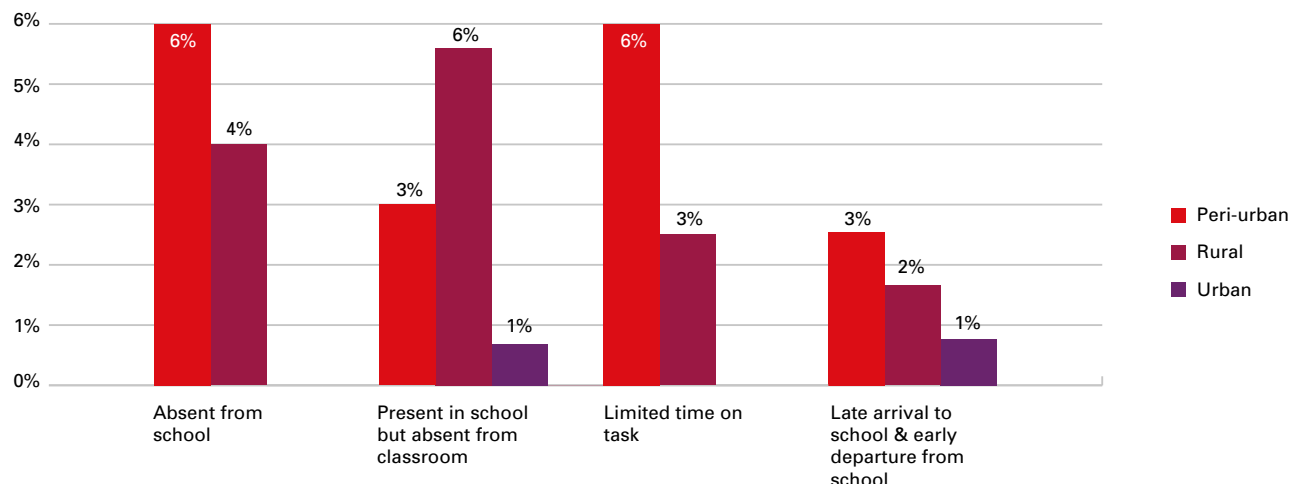


Figure 10: Frequency of teacher absenteeism for ‘once a week’ absences, by rural, urban and peri-urban differences



Why are teachers absent?

This section explores in detail findings from the qualitative data, and — when relevant — quantitative findings, to examine common determinants of teacher absenteeism that respondents point to as a hindrance at their school or in their districts. The analysis will focus on national and subnational level determinants first since they provide structure and guide the overall direction of education for all regions of Puntland. It will then focus on specific contexts or regions through an exploration of school-level determinants, followed by community and teachers, in order to understand how national directives materialize locally.

4.1. National-level determinants of absenteeism

The MoE&HE is described by respondents in this study as the central authority responsible for overseeing all aspects of educational development across the different regions. While there are indications that schools do not follow a standardized approach to teaching or learning in the classrooms, and that other stakeholders (such as the CEC) also play an important role in educational progress, there is a general understanding among the respondents that the Ministry's role is nonetheless the most significant across all regions and school types. Respondents view positively any efforts the Ministry put forth towards educational development: for example, the development of a new national curriculum and syllabus, and centralized primary and secondary school examinations are viewed as a positive step toward national uniformity, equality and inclusion. There is also an understanding that national efforts toward educational development are progressing, especially as the number of students and schools continue to increase. Because national-level actors are considered central to the overall functioning and success of education in the country, there are also a number of national-level predicaments that respondents describe as negatively influencing teachers' attendance. Some of these include the availability of education resources, teacher salary and incentives, and national oversight of education, and are examined further below.

4.1.1. Availability of educational resources

Lack of availability of teacher-training programmes and seminars are identified as key reasons why teachers are sometimes absent from schools or are reducing time spent on teaching. Poor classroom-management skills, learner engagement and lesson planning are examples of poor training that directly influence their time on task. A teacher from a rural public school in the Karkaar region stated: "Teachers are not well trained [here], so they lack good knowledge in classroom management ... some teachers spend a lot of time keeping order in the classroom." While some teachers relied on their experiences, rather than professional training, to improve their teaching methods, respondents describe these as insufficient solutions and that teachers need professional training in order to be up to date on advanced teaching methodologies. Teachers who had received some level of training for example, are described by respondents as using teaching methods that are more inclusive, innovative and engaging. In all 20 schools, more teacher-training opportunities from the national Government are determined as immediate and significant needs, and a key means of improving educators' skills, confidence and commitment towards their work.

While there is a strong acknowledgment across all schools for more training opportunities, it is also worth noting that national training programmes and seminars are often the main reason a teacher is absent from school for multiple days. Teachers are often required to travel for these opportunities and, as a result, are absent from school or from classrooms. Because training opportunities appear to be offered sporadically and without prior notice, some head teachers explained that oftentimes it was a struggle to cover that teacher's class. In some instances, the school is closed, especially if the head teacher leaves for training. Such absences however, are considered acceptable forms of absence. Although there is little information provided on the content or length of these programmes, generally, respondents described missing school or classes for at least 2 days and up to a week. Some teachers and head teachers also pointed out that teachers were selected through the Ministry (although they did not seem aware of what that process entailed), as teachers or head teachers often received a notification to send a specific number of teachers during the school year. A head teacher's lack of training is considered especially important for overseeing the overall effectiveness of teaching at their school. Some subnational representatives feel that when head teachers lack recruitment skills, they might hire teachers who do not value attendance, and therefore may be regularly absent from school or the classroom, and not providing sufficient instructional time while in class. Since they are often responsible for hiring, they are described as needing additional training so that they can recruit teachers based on thorough assessment of their qualifications.

There are no teachers absent in our school unless they are attending training opportunities. For instance, there was a training programme that all teachers from this school attended and as a result, the school was closed during that period.

– Teacher, Nugaal region, rural community school

The worst problem that we face in this school is that the students do not have textbooks and the teachers do not have teacher guides. The Ministry provided us with a syllabus but without textbooks. We don't have the luxury of online resources or access to a library in this town.

– Head teacher, Nugaal region, peri-urban public school

Along with training opportunities, many respondents expressed discontent at the Ministry's inability to provide schools with necessary teaching and learning materials. Their shortage are described as detrimental to the educator's capacity to achieve required learning competencies. Along with a shortage of textbooks and learning materials, teacher guides and stationary supplies are also identified as inadequate. The Government of Puntland recently standardized a new curriculum, which includes a new syllabus that all teachers in Puntland are mandated to teach from. However, while some schools have received the new syllabus, in all 20 schools, the accompanying texts and materials are either in extremely short supply or non-existent. This creates additional challenges according to the respondents, including inconsistency in students' learning, as they are often taught using diverse sources gathered by the teacher or head teacher personally. In some instances, students

were not taught necessary topics due to unavailability of textbooks or resources. The central examinations (mandatory upon completion of primary education) however, are based on the new syllabus, therefore hindering students' academic performance on these exams. Some teachers explain that in the past, the Ministry had successfully secured teaching kits for teachers through its collaboration with UNICEF. These kits are often referenced by teachers as positive outcomes of the Ministry's support for teachers.

The ministry staff is trying their best and I appreciate their efforts. However, I would like to encourage them to double their efforts. The schools need rehabilitation and teaching and learning materials. The ministry has not provided us anything for a long time, not even chalk.

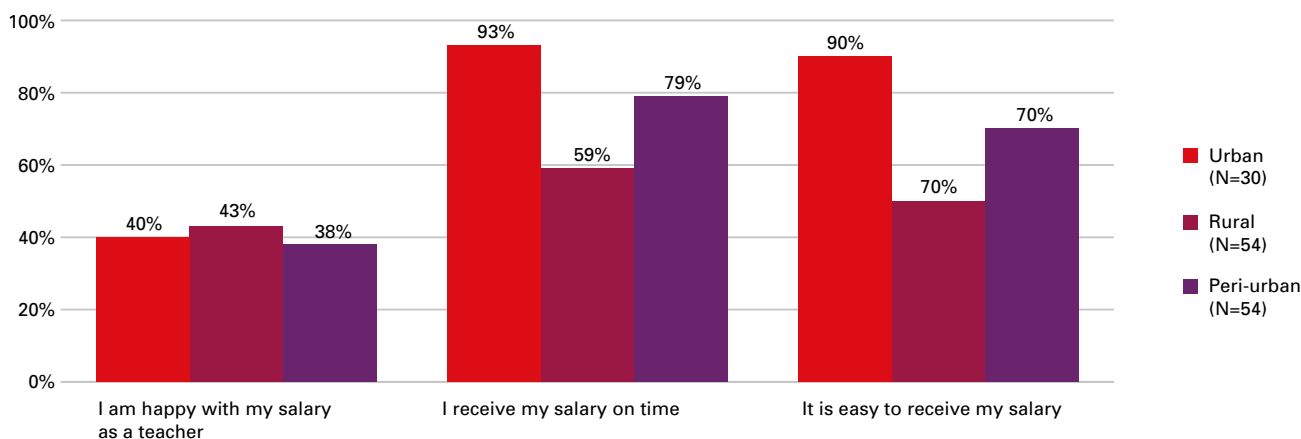
– Community representative, Karkaar region, urban public school

While some teachers are able to access relevant material through other sources, these options are not available to most schools as they lack libraries or online resources. Thus, some of these educators relied on older textbooks that were distributed by UNICEF and UNESCO, or foreign textbooks borrowed from neighbouring countries, in order to teach their students. Respondents often described the difficulty of teaching without necessary materials, with some finding it imperative to purchase textbooks with their personal finances, even as they struggled to meet their own financial needs. A teacher from a peri-urban public school in Nugaal explained: "We spend a lot of money on textbooks and exercise books. I think the previous syllabus by UNESCO were of better quality since they included textbooks. The current syllabus has no reference, neither textbooks nor teacher guides." It is generally felt among many respondents that external organizations have provided greater support than the Ministry towards their needs for resources, including teaching materials.

4.1.2. Teacher salary and incentives

Along with inadequate teaching resources, respondents identified low and inconsistent remuneration or additional factors (including lack of housing, transportation and health care) as instrumental in teachers' lack of motivation and commitment towards their punctuality or engagement with students. Figure 11 demonstrates that it is mainly teachers in urban contexts (93 per cent) who agreed that they received their salaries on time, compared to 59 per cent of rural and 79 per cent of peri-urban teachers. Similar differences were present when teachers were asked if it was easy to receive their pay, with 90 per cent of urban teachers, 50 per cent of rural and 70 per cent of peri-urban teachers agreeing with the statement. These responses indicate significant gaps between rural and urban teachers, however, teachers across the different regions (40 per cent urban, 43 per cent rural and 38 per cent peri-urban), seem to be unhappy with the amount of wages they receive.

Figure 11: Responses to statements related to salary



Salaries of most of the teachers interviewed for this study are not covered by the Ministry, however many respondents felt it was the Ministry's responsibility to ensure teachers were paid adequately and on time. Delayed salaries — ranging from one month to more than six months — result in additional disparities for teachers, which consequently affect their arrival to school and when they finish teaching. For example, teachers who are not paid at the end of the month (even when delayed by a few days) find it necessary to seek other means in order to meet their personal needs. This includes borrowing food from shops, taking loans or seeking additional employment. Some teachers explained that they tried not to be demotivated when they were not paid on time and instead focused on maintaining regular attendance. Others, however, maintained that teachers in such situations oftentimes struggled to keep their motivation and morale high because the stress of not receiving an income they had worked for, made it difficult to concentrate or continue on with their teaching duties.

Teachers have complained to me about the lack of salary many times. This is now the sixth month and they have not received their payments. I often try to raise awareness among the teachers, telling them that one day the situation will change and that they should tolerate for a little bit longer. Sometimes they arrive late, but in general, they try to be punctual and to teach well.

– Head teacher, Mudug region, rural community school.

Coming to school late or leaving early, as well as not teaching students during scheduled times, were considered consequences of teachers' discontent over delayed or insufficient salaries and incentives. Many respondents also cited disputes over salary with the head teacher as an additional reason why a teacher missed a scheduled class — even though they were present at the school — as a form of protest. There is also some indication that teachers feel less concerned about the potential repercussions of absenteeism because they are too focused on or worried about remuneration. A community representative from a rural public school in Cayn region argued: "Since the teachers are not provided enough salary, they are not afraid of any punishment. They also know that we don't have replacement teachers in the village."

I have been absent from school. I live three kilometres from this school, but I feel a lack of encouragement. The month ends, and I don't receive my salary. I have to admit that there are days where I have even been absent from the school during the school year.

– Teacher, Mudug region, rural community school

The ministry used to provide the teachers some incentives. But that has stopped. As a result, you see many teachers who, instead of preparing lessons or resting in their free time, engage in other income-generating opportunities, just to be able to provide for their families.

– Community representative, Sanaag region, peri-urban private school

Respondents describe salary delays and inadequacies as one important area where national oversight is needed with greater rigor and frequency. Some respondents felt the issue of remuneration had deteriorated in recent times, as the Ministry had, in the past, provided certain incentives and introduced additional efforts — with the support of international organizations — to prioritize and systematize teacher salaries. However, some head teachers and teachers maintain the Ministry has not fulfilled its promises and, as a result, many teachers across the schools who had been promised financial incentives have not received these for more than a year. A head teacher from an urban public school in Karkaar elaborated: “Four teachers from this school were enlisted to receive incentives [from an international organization] but they have not received them for one year and four months. We heard that the organization had released the incentives to the Ministry but they are stuck there somehow.”

The respondents’ articulation of why incentives were not provided

to teachers varied across schools, with some feeling international organizations failed to deliver what they had promised, and others considering this to be a consequence of the Ministry’s poor leadership. Along with salaries, teachers described incentives such as housing, transportation and health care as part of a teacher’s basic rights that needed to be secured by the Ministry. Some were also concerned that teachers did not receive any form of salary or incentive during school holidays, a three-month duration when schools are closed. Since students do not pay school fees during these months, teachers also do not receive salaries. Some respondents viewed this as a denial of teachers’ rights and thus an issue requiring national-level support.

4.1.3. National oversight of education

Education is a collective responsibility. It cannot be run solely by an individual, a group, a community or the school’s management. It is a service that needs to be managed and controlled by the Government.

– Head teacher, Sanaag region, urban public school.

Throughout their responses, teachers and some head teachers shared various examples of situations and concerns that they felt were related to the Ministry’s overall lack of engagement with schools, particularly in monitoring and overseeing schools and their functions. They instead maintained that international organizations provided much greater engagement and support than the Ministry or the national government. Most of the school and classroom constructions and teaching and learning resources for example, were made available to schools through various international agencies. Although many educators described feeling disconnected from national-level actors, they nonetheless considered the Ministry’s oversight as important for the provision of effective instructional time use. Better coordination of support to schools and monitoring

of learning and teaching at the school level were commonly described as measures the Ministry needed to take in order to improve education, and teacher motivation. In instances where the Ministry appeared to be engaged and leading coordination with international organizations, respondents attributed the success of these efforts to the national government. For example, a head teacher from a rural public school in Nugaal credited the financial support their school was receiving from a foreign country to the coordinating efforts of the President of Puntland. National level actors were referred to by some respondents as advocates for the schools and therefore, they view engagement with the official government offices as essential to their wellbeing. A head teacher from a peri-urban public school in Nugaal said: “The Ministry does not have financial resources but it advocates for the school and connects it with international NGOs so that they can provide support to the school. And we appreciate this.”

In schools where national government engagement is evident (often located in urban contexts), respondents felt it contributed positively towards teacher attendance and a school's progress. A teacher from a rural public school in Cayn, for example, remarked: "The Ministry's supervision provides me with a moral boost that accelerates my performance as a teacher." Many respondents, however, saw that there were important gaps in the Ministry's monitoring and assessment efforts, due to lack of standardized and routine oversight. For example, there are no processes in place to monitor teacher absences for official leave, such as training programmes. This was especially concerning because being absent from school due to training occurred frequently and often for many days. Lack of processes for monitoring teacher absences impacted their sense of accountability and commitment. This is especially concerning in schools where there is very little engagement with national actors. A head teacher from an urban public school in Mudug pointed out: "There are many schools in this district that do not meet minimum requirements. The Ministry should take the responsibility to disqualify such schools. They also need to ensure that teachers are properly assessed as there are also many teachers who teach, but with very little, if any, qualification." Some respondents also characterized the Ministry's engagement as unequal across the different regions. Those in rural and remote locations, or areas deemed unsafe to travel to, felt the Ministry was not putting in enough effort to address their needs, including support from international organizations. Most of the schools included in this study were not aware of the work the Ministry did on an ongoing basis, particularly any new educational initiatives or projects it was engaged in.

The role of the Ministry of Education is to assess schools, evaluate their standards of operation, the environment of the school, its infrastructure, and quality of its teachers and education. If the school is below standards, they need to be disqualified by the Ministry. But unfortunately, this does not happen here.

– Head teacher, Mudug region, urban public school

Summary

National-level engagement is generally viewed positively by respondents and considered important to the overall wellbeing and functioning of a school. Respondents who appear to be satisfied with the Ministry's efforts also report its positive impact on teacher morale and overall confidence and commitment to teaching. It also appears, however, that there are many shortcomings regarding the national government's extent and frequency of engagement and is consequently related to why teacher absenteeism might occur at a school.

4.2. Subnational level determinants of teacher absenteeism

Regional and district-level representatives from the Ministry often characterize their engagement with schools with a sense of commitment and personal responsibility. Like many teachers and head teachers, these respondents consider many of the challenges they come across as connected to the larger social and economic context of Puntland. Most are quick to point out that they are aware of the limitations their offices experience due to financial constraints. However, they also recognize the importance of working closely with school leadership and staff in order to ensure that teachers are on task in the classroom. Teachers and head teachers who work closely with regional and district-level offices depict these experiences as positive and motivating. Some educators explain that they look forward to visits from their local educational officers because they receive support that helps them strengthen their instructional skills and practices. These experiences however are not common across all the schools focused on in this study. Some respondents, including subnational actors themselves, point towards several challenges that limit their positive engagement with schools, resulting in poor teacher motivation, absence from school or classrooms, and their instructional time use. Mainly, REOs and DEOs monitoring capacity, teacher training support and level of authority emerge in this study as themes that hinder teachers' presence in the school, classroom and the time they spend on teaching.

When the school inspectors visit our school, they meet with the teachers and discuss issues relevant to their teaching. They also monitor and observe teachers while they are in the classroom. Based on their observation, they often provide feedback on what they thought the teachers did well and what they need to improve on. Critical feedback can be effective when it is done by someone from outside the school. So, for this reason, they provide us with their constructive feedback.

– Head teacher, Mudug region, peri-urban public school

Despite the [financial] difficulties our office faces, we often work with schools and parents in discouraging teacher absenteeism. If there is a teacher who is frequently absent at a school, then together, we try to counsel the teacher and discourage them from absenteeism. If that does not work, then we jointly decide to replace that teacher.

– Sub-national representative, rural Sool region

4.2.1. Monitoring capacity

Many respondents see school visits for monitoring purposes as a key responsibility of subnational actors. Often these visits include arriving to the school and meeting mainly with the head teacher and occasionally with teachers and students. During these visits, school inspectors perform a variety of tasks that do not appear to be standardized and often vary from school to school. In most of the schools, however, meeting with the head teacher and reviewing attendance sheets appear to be common components of their visits. Other forms of monitoring include inquiries related to student transfers, student enrolment and information related to national examinations. In some instances, the visits also include classroom observations and talking to teachers directly about their pedagogical practices. A district education officer from Mudug described their monitoring process as frequent and thorough: "Every visit we carry out at schools, we ensure that the school is operational, that routine teaching is ongoing, that both students and teachers are present, that the head master is present and conducting regular supervision and that both student and teacher attendance sheets are available."

Some respondents point out that, on these visits, REOs and DEOs also address issues related to teacher absenteeism, often in the form of awareness raising and reminding teachers of engaging in positive teaching practices. In some instances, subnational officers coordinate closely with members of the CEC and head teachers to establish procedures for motivating teachers and to discourage them from absenteeism (including, for example, promotion based on performance and attendance). Though these are not common, the schools where they occur describe them as positively affecting teachers' motivation and dedication to their work. In schools where this engagement is not frequent or thorough, teachers are described as absent or late to school more frequently and not always on task in the classroom.

Some regional and district education officers felt constricted in their monitoring capacity due to lack of resources, particularly lack of travel and accommodation funds for carrying out school visits. Some district-level officers, however, felt they received less support than their regional counterparts. This appeared to affect schools located in rural and other remote parts more frequently than those in urban contexts, as noted by an REO from Mudug: “Sometimes, there are plans to supervise a rural community school but the plan is not materialized due to transportation constraints. Our office has the responsibility to monitor but we are financially unable to carry out these responsibilities”. A number of head teachers also saw financial constraints as a key reason why local education officials were limited in their capacity to support teachers or schools. Thus, while respondents saw that there was a need for more monitoring and feedback, they were also quick to point out that it was not entirely within the regional and district education offices’ scope to fulfil these duties.

The district education officer is in a poorer financial situation than us teachers. Neither the Ministry nor the community provide them with financial support. They don’t receive salaries, nor do they have an office. So what can they do for us if they are in that situation themselves?

– Head teacher, Guardafui region, peri-urban public school

Others, however, raised concerns over this lack of engagement, especially in providing guidance to teachers and monitoring their instructional time use in the classroom. A head teacher from an urban private school in Nugaal explained: “The frequency of school inspection is minimal, maybe twice a year. We often regard their inspection with positivity because someone outside the school is coming and giving us unbiased feedback, that we often find useful”.

There also appears to be a lack of a clear strategy or standard procedure in place for the supervision process. The practices vary across schools and some respondents felt not enough was being done to help improve a school’s overall condition. In particular, lack of feedback or follow-up with teachers were frequently highlighted as areas that needed further strengthening. A head teacher from a rural public school in Sanaag for example, argued that supervisors often did not provide feedback to his school following a visit: “We don’t know what they do with the information that they gather from us [...] We wish however that we could receive some sort of feedback, negative or positive, as long as it is constructive enough for us to improve our work”.

4.2.2. Teacher training support

Providing training opportunities to teachers, head teachers and sometimes students seems to be a common characteristic of the support that subnational actors provide to schools. When respondents describe the role of DEOs and REOs, they point to training opportunities as one example of the support they provide to schools and teachers. These training opportunities are offered in diverse frequency across the schools, with some schools receiving one to two on a monthly basis, and others from none to at least three times a year. Head teachers and teachers explained there were only a limited number of training opportunities for teachers at a school and therefore only some of the teachers could take advantage of them. The respondents did not provide information as to what these trainings entailed but pointed out that they wanted them more frequently. Schools not receiving such opportunities find it affects their confidence because they are not able to manage students or to provide lessons in an engaging and informative manner to students.

There are many plans in place for my district. We are planning to bring all the teachers in this district in order to provide them a training package that will mainly focus on their individual responsibilities, maintaining school punctuality, and respecting the rights of students. We believe that this training will have a positive impact on the teachers’ performance overall.

– Sub-national representative

Some teachers also pointed out that they sometimes received on-the-job training from school inspectors who observed their teaching and provided feedback on the spot. Not all teachers, however, received such feedback: in most instances, REOs and DEOs inspected teachers in the classroom but did not follow up with them. This left some teachers feeling frustrated and marginalized as they felt receiving feedback could have direct positive impact on their delivery of lessons. Thus, while regional and district-level ministry representatives offered some level of training support to schools, the frequency and depth of these varied across schools.

4.2.3. Level of authority

There are variations among respondents' understanding of the role and responsibilities of subnational actors. Head teachers, for example, often characterize positively the overall engagement and support that subnational offices provide to their schools. They usually highlight the importance of maintaining regular communication and positive relations with these offices, especially as some consider them as their advocates at the national level. A number of head teachers pointed out that they shared with DEOs and REOs challenges their schools were facing and that they wanted the ministry to be aware of and provide support if possible. Therefore, efforts are made to ensure there is continuous ongoing engagement with these actors despite material constrictions. A head teacher from a rural community school in Mudug noted: "[The DEOs and REOs] offices are far from here. The DEO for instance needs a car to travel in order to reach here. For that reason, we don't see them often. However, we communicate by telephone all the time. The DEO connects us with the Ministry and the regional education office".

I would not say that there is no supervision but rather, that the frequency is very minimal and we can understand the reasons are due to financial limitations. There are other means, however, for us to continue communicating. When they cannot come to the school for inspection, we talk to them on the telephone and discuss whatever we consider necessary.

– Head teacher, Nugaal region, rural community school

Some educational officers also recognize the need for continuous engagement and support with schools despite financial limitations. For example, while teacher-management tasks are described as mainly the responsibility of the head teacher, some regional officers consider it their responsibility to provide head teachers with additional support. Mainly this support is provided through their active engagement in the teacher-recruitment process. This is considered especially important as the guidelines established by the Ministry for teacher recruitment do not appear to be followed. Within the teacher-recruitment guidelines, regional and district-level officers are required to provide support to head teachers with teacher selection, though head teachers and local educational officials interviewed in this study did not seem aware of this process. This might be due to lack of clarity in terms of who is responsible for hiring teachers, which in some schools is considered the responsibility of the head teacher only, and in other schools, a collaborative process between the local Ministry officials and school leadership.

Sub-national education officers don't sanction or report absent teachers. They just talk to them. By the way, the teachers are not directly accountable to them as they deal mainly with the head teacher. They can neither sanction nor report absent teachers.

– Head teacher, Karkaar region, rural public school

While head teachers are generally more aware and supportive of REO and DEO engagement, teachers seem less optimistic or aware. Teachers sometimes described feeling disconnected from regional and district-level authority's engagement with their school. They viewed these inspectors as lacking authority and not interested in the teachers but rather the school leadership. Many are also unaware or unclear of the purpose of their visitation or supervision of their schools. A teacher from a peri-urban public school in Mudug stated: "They visit but not that often. If they are not meeting with the head teacher during their visits, then I am not sure what they do. They don't meet with the teachers as far as I know." It is also unclear to some of the teachers as to what the purpose of subnational actors' visits to the school is, particularly

as they do not have the authority to sanction teachers or implement rules at the school. Some teachers described subnational actors as mainly responsible for overseeing student enrolment or student transfers and not in providing any support to teachers. At least one teacher at a rural Mudug school was unaware if such an office existed in their town even though the head teacher for the same school had explained that they visited the school at least once a month to collect information.

This lack of awareness of the roles and responsibilities of REOs and DEOs is further complicated due to overlapping roles between them, the CEC and sometimes the head teacher. It is not always clear to head teachers, community representatives or subnational actors, who is directly responsible for supervising teacher absenteeism. Most subnational actors and teachers acknowledge head teachers as solely in control of this responsibility, but some head teachers on the other hand, feel this is mainly the obligation of subnational representatives. A head teacher from a rural community school in Nugaal argued: “[The school inspectors’] main responsibility is to discourage teacher absences, provide encouragement for the teachers, raising awareness and providing advice to teachers. This is basically what they are expected to do”.

This overlap is also evident in respondents’ descriptions of the CEC’s interactions with schools, whereby the CEC is described as performing similar tasks as the REO and DEOs. Some respondents also felt greater accountability towards CECs because they had the financial means to look after the needs of the school. A head teacher from a rural public school in Sanaag stated: “The CEC come to the school quite often. They try to give us as much support as they can. They take part in our planning sessions and talk to the teachers and the students, soliciting their feedback”. This sense of accountability towards the CEC is especially heightened in schools where respondents sense a disconnect from subnational offices or when there is poor communication or lack of feedback from these actors.

In schools where there is confusion regarding the authority of the different educational actors, teachers appear to miss school or their scheduled lessons more regularly, or they do not engage learners as required while in class. Head teachers find it difficult to manage these teachers and often are not sure who they can appeal to for support. Even REOs and DEOs seem to be aware of their limitation, and often feel that they too lack the authority to provide head teachers with the support they require. Some feel that due to lack of support from the Ministry, they are unable to carry out their responsibilities.

In our community, we have the CECs who are engaged with the day-to-day activities of the school. If our school faces any critical financial difficulties, we often appeal to the CEC and they fundraise and find ways to help us resolve our difficulties. The district education officers however, do not have the necessary facility or resources to help us.

– Head teacher, Cayn region, peri-urban public school

Summary

The role and influence of subnational representatives varies across schools and does not seem to follow a clear approach or consistent guidelines. While they are generally appreciated for their engagement and support, respondents see financial constraints as a barrier, affecting how frequently local government officials can support schools, and thus weakening their overall capacity to support or to enforce the implementation of national decisions within schools. As noted in this analysis, it is often the CEC that steps in and provides support to teachers and schools in general. The role of the CEC in supporting and guiding schools and its staff is examined further through an analysis of community-level causes of teacher absence.

4.3. Community-level determinants of teacher absenteeism

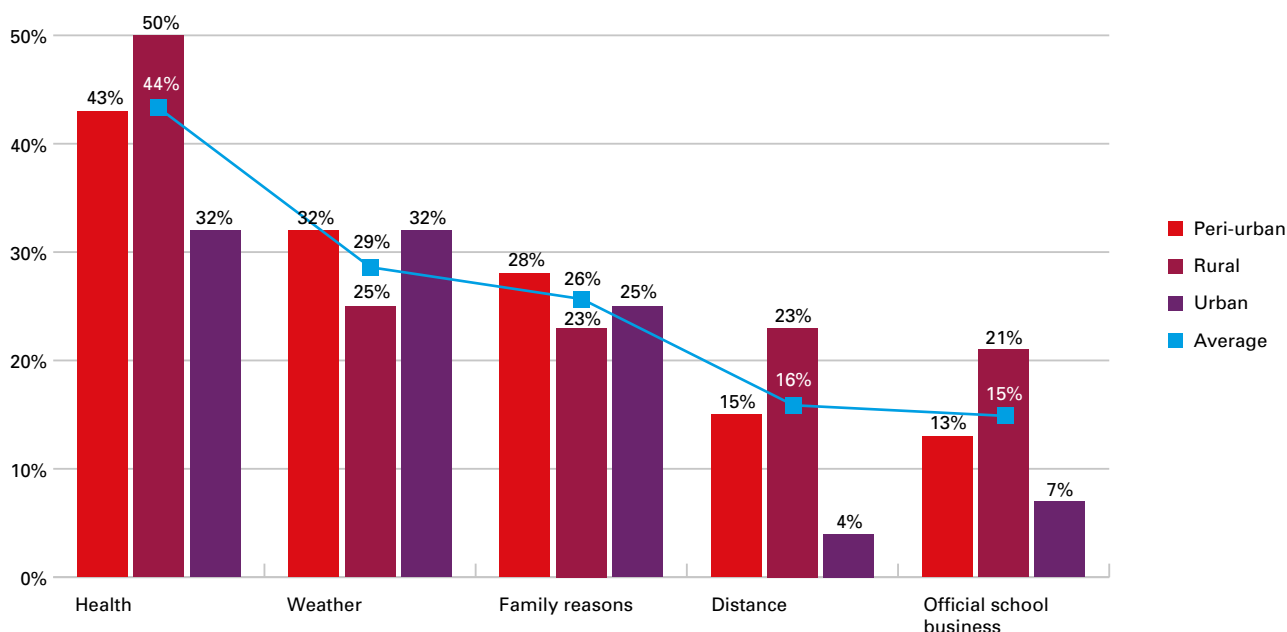
All of the communities within which the 20 selected schools are located, appear to be facing similar challenges due to poverty, unemployment, and poor or inadequate availability of social services. Some common services lacking in these communities include access to clean water, electricity, healthcare facilities and transport. In areas where some of these services are available, residents’ access is still limited due to high costs and limited financial means. It is common for members of the community to travel to different regions in order to sustain their livelihoods, especially if they live in areas where lack of resources or harsh weather conditions make life unbearable for them or their livestock. As members of the community, these challenges also impede on teachers’ ability to live satisfactorily and, subsequently, to fulfil their teaching responsibilities. This section explores how climatic conditions, the transportation, and the community’s monitoring and engagement capacity hinder teacher’s presence in the school or in the classroom, along with time spent on teaching.

4.3.1. Climatic conditions

Weather conditions (rain, very hot and cold temperatures) were described by many respondents as a common reason why they were absent from school or arrived late. Rain in particular was described by many respondents as a key reason why teachers and students were absent from school. A rural community school teacher in Nugaal explains: “It is common that I miss school due to bad weather. For instance, when there is heavy raining, it affects everyone, including other teachers and the students”. Some teachers also point out that they find it difficult to complete their time on task, or to enter their classrooms — even though they are present at the school — due to the noise caused by the rain falling on the roof. Classrooms and school playground conditions are described as wet, muddy, and not conducive to learning as a result.

Arriving late or leaving school early is another common outcome of poor weather condition. This was evident in the survey data, with 32 per cent of urban and peri-urban teachers, and 25 per cent of rural teachers selecting weather as the second-most-common reason (after health) for their late arrival or early departures from school. (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Main reasons why teachers are late and/or may leave school early



Teachers describe finding it difficult to arrive to school early in the morning or staying until the end of the school day due to very cold or very hot weather. Those teachers who normally walk to school experience difficulties on hot days, therefore causing them to not come to school or to leave early in order to avoid the heat. Figure 9 also shows that climatic conditions affect teacher attendance in rural and peri-urban locations more frequently than of those living in urban areas.

Drought is another cause of distress for teachers and head teachers, particularly for those living in or belonging to nomadic communities. It is common for teachers of nomadic background for example, to be regularly absent from schools in order to sustain their nomadic lifestyle (i.e. looking after livestock). A head teacher from a peri-urban public school in Nugaal describes: “Many families in town keep goats. During the dry season, it becomes necessary for the goats to be pushed to the far side of town, where there is still some greenery. That happens every day the whole dry season”.

4.3.2. Remoteness and transportation

For many teachers, the distance from their homes to school, along with their access to transportation, determines their punctuality. It is common for teachers who live far from school, to arrive late or to leave school early so they can reach home before dark. As Figure 9 illustrates, this factor affects rural teachers more frequently than those in urban and, to a lesser extent, peri-urban areas. It is worth noting however, that in the qualitative interviews, even urban teachers described transport challenges as common causes for their lateness to school.

Some of the respondents also explain that nomadic teachers are more frequently absent compared to other teachers due to the distance between the school and where their families live. Many head teachers, students and community representatives describe nomadic teachers’ absence as ‘justifiable’ or acceptable because of these teachers’ unique living conditions (i.e. looking after land or animals or visiting their family who often live far away from the community the school is in).

Some respondents (particularly head teachers and subnational education officials) also maintain that providing nomadic teachers with flexibility for absences from school and late arrivals is necessary because they need to check on the wellbeing of their families and livelihood. A head teacher from a peri-urban public school in Cayn, describes that he, along with two other nomadic teachers at his school, have synchronized their leave schedules, so they can take one extra day’s leave every 15 days to visit their homes and spend time with their families.

The qualitative interviews also reveal that many respondents, particularly REOs and DEOs consider absenteeism as an issue affecting mainly rural schools. The reasons provided often include poor monitoring capacity of the head teacher or lack of regional and

Since the start of the school year, I have not arrived late but I left early many times. The classroom is very hot. By 11 a.m. I start to really sweat, and the children become very thirsty. It happens almost every day, including today.

– Teacher, rural Karkaar region, public school for refugees

Since most of our teachers are from nomadic households, drought and lack of water often prevents them from arriving to school on time. Sometimes, it prevents them from coming to school at all.

– Teacher, Cayn region, rural public school

There is a nomad teacher who was given leave of absence from school in order to attend to find his missing camels. I personally gave him the leave and assured him that I, as the regional education officer, will cover for his missed classes during his leave.

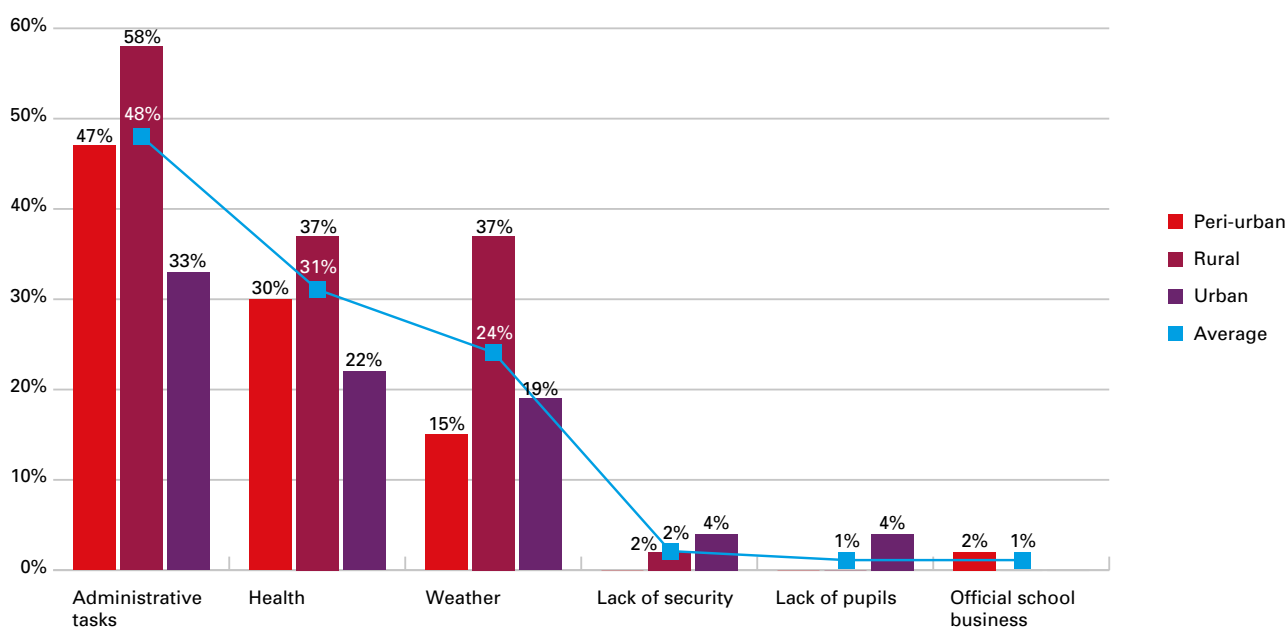
– Subnational representative, Cayn region

In urban schools, the teachers are fully engaged with their teaching tasks and do not have any other responsibilities. They have a fixed working schedule, and both students and teachers have a specific schedule to follow. In rural areas however, circumstances are different. Rural schools serve nomad children and they come to school at 9 a.m. instead of 7:30 a.m.

– Subnational representative, Sool region

district-level supervision, all of which are described as weaker in rural areas than in the cities. The qualitative findings also point to rural urban differences, particularly in the determinants of classroom absence. As Figure 13 illustrates, ‘administrative tasks’ is the main cause of classroom absence, however, this appears to affect rural teachers (58 per cent) and peri-urban teachers (47 per cent) significantly more than urban teachers (33 per cent). This exemplifies not only commonalities in terms of why teachers might be absent, but also that there are regional differences.

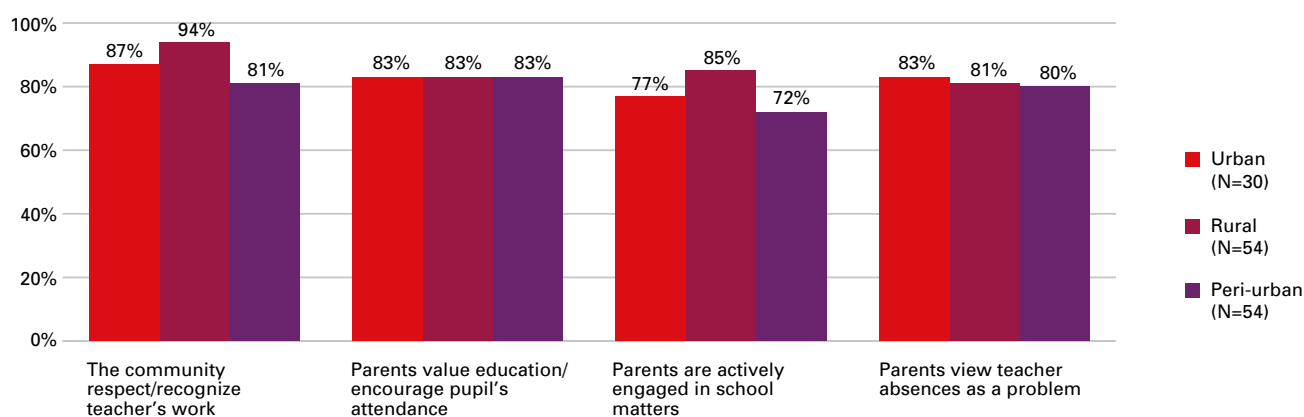
Figure 13: Main reasons for missing class while at school



4.3.3. Community engagement and monitoring capacity

Finally, many teachers and head teachers describe parental and the CEC’s engagement with their school as an important factor in their daily activities. Regardless of where the school is located, teachers value their relationship with the community. Figure 14 illustrates that teachers are valued for their work, especially in rural (94 per cent) and urban (84 per cent) schools, and that parents support their child’s learning and encourage them to attend school (83 per cent of respondents across the different school types agreed or strongly agreed). It does appear however, that parents are slightly less active in the school’s daily affairs particularly in peri-urban schools (72 per cent), compared to rural schools (85 per cent) and urban schools (77 per cent). These findings suggest that while parents appreciate and value teachers’ work across the 20 schools, their level of activeness appears to be much higher in rural schools than in urban or peri-urban contexts.

Figure 14: Teachers' perception of parental and community engagement



These engagements however vary across the different regions, with some schools experiencing higher frequency of community involvement than others. Despite this variation, most respondents point to the community as a key factor in how often teachers are absent from school or if they are limiting their teaching time. In schools where these relations are weak, teachers are frequently absent from school and the classroom, or they do not stay on task while in class. In these situations, it is often a challenge for the head teacher to enforce actions on their own, especially since they do not cover the teacher's salary or are able to provide any other incentives. Most head teachers therefore try to work closely with the CEC, especially when it comes to addressing absenteeism.

Also, while there does not seem to be a standard process across the schools for monitoring teacher attendance, it appears parents often initiate the process once informed through their child that their teacher is absent or not teaching as required. The CEC and head teachers address the problem using a variety of approaches, including salary deduction — if the reasons teachers provide for their absence are considered unsatisfactory — and verbal warnings, and dismissal - if the behaviour continues. A CEC member for a school in the Cayn region explains: "We often encourage teachers to maintain presence at school since the students are always there to learn. There was also an incident where we have totally dismissed a teacher from the school after several warnings due to the frequency of his absences."

The truth is that today, the majority of the schools are in the hands of the community. They provide awareness programmes for the students to encourage them to come to school. They also take part in school meetings and hold the head teacher accountable for his duties. They even have the authority to replace missing or frequently absent teachers if and when the head teacher informs them.

– Subnational representative, Bari Region

Sometimes parents receive complaints about their children fighting in the classroom due to the absence of their teacher, or while they are reviewing their child's lessons, they notice that their child did not have a lesson for a particular subject. When they ask their children about this, the child tells them that their teacher did not show up to class that day. We receive most of our information about absent teachers from CEC members or the parents.

– Subnational representative, Mudug region

The community does not have much financial strength, but they help us however they can, when we need their hand. They also help us with the cleaning, painting and decoration of the school. In the last windy season, the roof of the school came off. We sought [a] hand from the community and they made [a] contribution.

– Community representative, Cayn Region, peri-urban public school

Working closely with the CEC is considered by many head teachers as an effective means through which they can monitor and improve teachers' punctuality. Along with monitoring, the CEC also regularly raises awareness among teachers on the importance of attendance and effective use of teaching time. Usually this is in the form of moral support and encouragement, reminding teachers of their responsibility towards learners, especially as their salaries are derived from students' tuition fees. In some of the selected schools, the CEC also provides teachers with additional monetary and material incentives. A teacher from a rural public school in Sanaag stated: "In addition to financial support, the community has an account where monetary donations are accumulated and used for the benefit of the school or a teacher's special needs, such as health".

In some schools the CEC also addresses teachers' personal grievances, especially if they prevent teachers from coming to school. For example, when a teacher was absent for two weeks at a rural refugee school in Karkaar, the CEC helped in resolving the obstacles she was facing: "She and her husband argued. He forbade her to teach and she refused to listen. We mediated between the couple and resolved their concerns. She is now working at the school again". Some of the other forms of support the community provides regularly include, making donations towards school infrastructure, equipment, and financial support for ceremonies and school-related events. Another common form of support — particularly in communities where families live below poverty — involves the community volunteering their time and labour to the school, most commonly to clean the school grounds.

Summary

Community-level factors appear to contribute both negatively and positively towards teacher punctuality and presence in the school and in the classroom. Weather conditions cause teachers to arrive late or leave early, and also hinder their ability to remain focused while teaching in the classroom. The distance of the school from a teacher's residence and the availability of transportation also causes teachers to miss lessons or arrive late to school. Quantitative and qualitative data from the selected schools suggest however, that the community provides positive encouragement and support to teachers through their increased presence and engagement with the teachers and the administration. Their collaboration with head teachers is especially worth examining further as head teachers often have the most direct and frequent oversight of teachers at the school-level.

4.4. School-level determinants of teacher absenteeism

The 20 selected schools are located across various regions, and within diverse geographic and social contexts. In all these contexts, schools appear to play a central role in the development and progress of the learners and the community more broadly. Teachers often describe with pride the contributions they can make towards their community by educating children who go on to higher learning or find jobs. The academic success of students, often captured in national examinations, also provides a source of motivation for teachers, and brings a positive reputation to their schools.

There are however challenges the schools face, including shortages of essential resources like chairs and desks, libraries, and learning aids. In rural regions, the situation is especially dire, as respondents describe not having access to clean drinking water, proper-functioning toilets, classrooms or fences. While all of these limitations impact on teachers' attendance and punctuality, there are three factors in particular that appear to be key causes of teacher absenteeism. They include, the head teacher's role and responsibilities, the working environment of teachers and, finally, the role of the student. Each are examined in detail below.

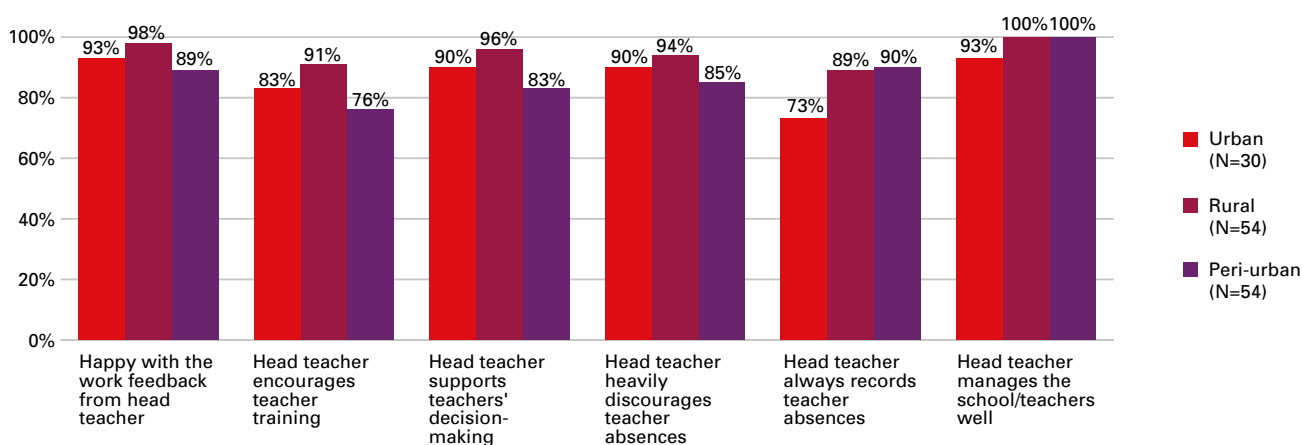
This profession does not earn you enough financially, but you are developing and educating humans. For instance, I often teach students from zero and watch them progress through the ranks. Once you notice them advance their education level to the higher level, it gives you massive pride and satisfaction, realizing that I had contributed to their development.

– Teacher, Nugaal region, urban primary school

4.4.1. Head teacher's role and responsibilities

The head teacher is viewed as a central figure within the school and often the main link between the school and the community, and regional and national educational offices. Within the school, a head teacher is also perceived as the key authority on overseeing and managing teachers. A vast majority of the teachers interviewed for this study appear to be satisfied with their head teacher's monitoring and leadership capacity (see Figure 15). Teachers across the different regions (urban 93 per cent, rural and peri-urban 100 per cent) believe their head teachers manage the school and teachers well. Teachers also appear to be satisfied with the feedback they receive, especially in rural schools (98 per cent), followed by urban (93 per cent) and slightly less among peri-urban teachers (89 per cent). Variations among the different school types are evident in how often teachers feel their head teachers record teacher absenteeism. Urban teachers (73 per cent) believe it is less common than rural teachers (89 per cent) and peri-urban teachers (90 per cent). This might be due to the smaller sizes of schools and staff in rural areas, therefore making it easier for head teachers to reach out to teachers or to follow up on their absenteeism.

Figure 15: Teacher's perception of head teacher's leadership and monitoring capacity



In all 20 schools, there seems to be a process in place for keeping a daily track of teachers' attendance. The process requires that teachers sign in when they arrive at school and sign out when they have completed their teaching for the day. Many head teachers explain that they regularly monitor these attendance sheets in order to track and address teacher absenteeism. Several teachers pointed out that they signed attendance sheets daily and saw these as the main form of absenteeism monitoring at their school. For teachers who are regularly absent or coming late to school, there also appears to be a process in place. The initial step involves a verbal warning, often issued by the head teacher (sometimes in collaboration with a member of the CEC). If the behaviour persists, the next action involves salary deduction. Finally, if the absenteeism continues, even after a warning and/or salary deduction, a decision is made by the head teacher (usually in collaboration with the CEC) to dismiss them.

Although a small number of cases of dismissal were shared by respondents, it appears this step is not enforced often, especially in schools facing financial and material constraints. Some head teachers explained that finding replacements was challenging especially since the salaries were not enough to attract new candidates. Similarly, a subnational respondent from the Bari region described why some head teachers might overlook regular absences: "Head teachers are leaders, and leaders have to be considerate. They know of the circumstances teachers face and, as a result, may sometimes tolerate teacher absence." Many schools have a code of conduct for their teachers, which includes awareness on the importance of punctuality. Head teachers often use this document to remind teachers of their responsibilities towards learners, especially as most pay school fees to the school and teachers in order to learn. Moreover, respondents pointed to weekly teacher meetings organized by the head teacher, as a successful strategy in reducing school absence and increasing punctuality at their schools.

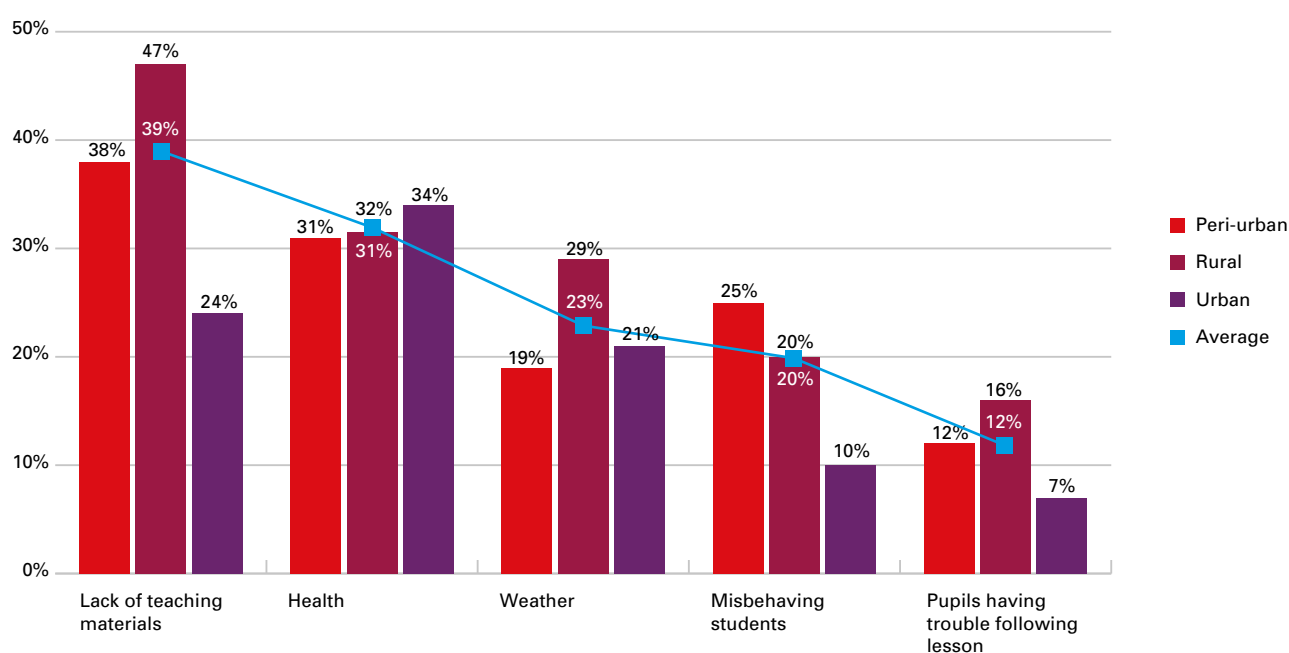
On the other hand, some respondents, particularly subnational representatives, consider the head teacher as a key factor in why absenteeism might be happening at a school. Specifically, their lack of classroom observation and poor monitoring of attendance are viewed as reasons why teachers may not attend their classes, limit teaching time, or not come to school. Poor monitoring of attendance and lack of following up by the head teacher are also considered key reasons why teachers arrive late or miss school. In contrast, schools where the head teacher has a reputation for monitoring attendance or providing strong leadership, absenteeism is described to be lower, even when teachers face financial or material constraints. A teacher from a rural community school in Mudug region remarked: "I have not received my salary for the last six months, and you know what, the family is asking for support to cover for the livelihood, and I did not receive my salary for six months. This kind of matter often brings a challenge within my family [...] but the head master and the parents are on my back, therefore I cannot miss the school." Thus, teachers often feel motivated when the head teacher is engaged, whether through classroom observations, or when they provide feedback on their lesson planning, or reward them for avoiding absenteeism.

4.4.2. Working environment of teachers

The school environment is described by some teachers as a place of cooperation and support between teachers and the head teacher. Teachers explain they often help other teachers with difficult lessons, disputes with students or colleagues, or when they are absent and not able to provide lessons to students. Despite these positive relations, workload appears to be a major cause of absence for teachers, most often resulting in them missing scheduled classes, not completing a lesson time, or being away from school. Many of the respondents describe school-related administrative work or 'official duty' as the main reason they miss scheduled classes or may be interrupted while teaching. The most common tasks taking teachers out of the classroom include Ministry-led training, which often requires travel to other districts or regions, on-the-job training — resulting in missed classes — meetings with stakeholders — including CEC members, regional officers, and parents — and preparation for public or official school ceremonies and events. Along with workload, poor working relations with head teachers or students, are also viewed as factors causing teacher absence. Respondents said disputes with the head teacher were a common reason for a teacher being from their classroom or arriving late to class. These disputes appear to be over salary, with teachers often missing classes because they are inquiring about their salaries with the head teacher.

Finally, lack of teaching and learning resources — including school and classroom infrastructure — is described as a major hindrance, and a key reason why teachers might not be on task. In the survey data, teachers in rural schools (47 per cent) and peri-urban (38 per cent) point to lack of TLMs as the main reason they limit their time on task, compared to only 24 per cent of urban teachers (see Figure 16)

Figure 16: Common reasons for reduced time on task



The most common shortages across all selected schools include lack of textbooks, teacher guides and reference books. There also appears to be no standardized curriculum at the district or regional level, even though many respondents are aware the Government of Puntland has released a newly revised national curriculum. The most common effects of lack of teaching materials includes incompleteness of a lesson. This is especially the case for classes that require additional teaching aids. A teacher at a peri-urban private school in Sanaag said: "The math teacher and the students do not have compass sets, rulers, and measurement sets. The geography teacher does not have maps or a globe and there is no lab to give

I teach the students computers even though there are no computers at the school! So it is difficult to explain only in theory a course that requires practical work. I often need a projector and an internet access. Despite all that, I am expected to teach the students computer literacy. So I make do with what I have. Sometimes I make drawings of the computer interface on the blackboard using chalk, or even use my mobile phone to show the students the lesson.

– Teacher, Bari region, urban community school

students practical lessons. All we have are a blackboard and a piece of chalk.” A small number of schools had received the new syllabi but not the accompanying texts. A teacher from a peri-urban rural school in Nugaal said this was not helpful: “The Ministry prepared and shared with us the syllabus but has not provided the textbooks to be used for reference. We therefore spend a lot of time looking for teaching materials (lessons), even from the Internet.” The availability of internet allows some teachers to find online teaching resources, however this option is not available at most schools due to lack of resources.

Respondents also describe the classroom and the school ground as not conducive to learning, with some expressing concerns about its impact on the overall academic performance of students. For example, some respondents explain that a shortage of playgrounds for the children causes them to be disruptive in the classroom because there is no place for them to release energy or to socialize, resulting in the teacher spending a great deal of time managing learners in the classroom.

4.4.3. Role of the student

Students are often described as a source of positive motivation for teachers, especially when they succeed academically. Many teachers for example, highlight that they feel immense pride and motivation when their students do well academically. Some teachers measure the effectiveness of their instructional time use by how well their students understand a lesson they have delivered. On the other hand, the role of the student is also considered a key factor causing absenteeism. Poor student behaviour, for example, results in teachers not attending to their class, or covering the entire lesson duration. Behavioural issues appear to be common across the different regions, with common causes including overcrowded classrooms, poor classroom management, and lack of parental engagement or support. A community representative for an urban community school in Bari illustrates: “I think there are factors that can demotivate teachers. The main one is that the young generation is born into a country without an effective government and is therefore filled with disorder. Some of the students come to school with daggers concealed in their school bags. You therefore find many teachers leaving their teaching profession because they cannot cope with, or control, violent youth.”

I really admire after I see that the students I lectured have advanced their educational level and are benefiting from the efforts I put into their learning. For instance, there are schools in our towns, where there are teachers teaching but the outcome on students is not very encouraging. For me, I believe that I don't only teach the students but teach students with a positive end result, and that gives me pleasure and pride.

– Teacher, Nugaal region, rural private school

Along with behaviour, students' poor performance, due to hunger and poor health and family stress, are considered crucial factors preventing students from concentrating on their learning, and teachers from completing their scheduled lessons. Interviewed teachers also described students who appeared agitated, falling asleep in class, or struggling to see the board due to poor hearing and eyesight. This often resulted in the teachers repeating lessons or using class-time to complete a previous day's lesson. Completing work assigned for homework was a common occurrence across many schools. Students also experience stress due to their living conditions or because they work to support their families, and consequently, lack learning materials.

As a result, student absenteeism appears to be a prevalent occurrence across the different regions the schools are located in. It also seems that student absenteeism is both a consequence and a cause of teacher absenteeism. When students are not present in the classroom, teachers sometimes cancel their lessons in order to

avoid repetition the next day. Some teachers are concerned, however, that frequent absenteeism causes gaps in students' learning. A teacher from a rural refugee school in Karkaar explained: "When a teacher is absent, a gap is created! Other teachers fill in his role, increasing the already-existing pressure on teachers, and obliging the present teachers to reduce their normal class time so as to have time for the classes without [a] teacher." Similarly, when students do not pay their fees on time, it causes delays in teacher payments, thus causing them stress and affecting their overall commitment toward their work. Students are also absent much more frequently around the time when school fees are due.

Summary

While there are many diverse circumstances and determinants that respondents consider to be factors in teacher absenteeism, the three highlighted in this report are prevalent across most of the schools, regardless of location. The head teacher holds a significant role within the school and is recognized by both teachers and community members as a key figure in the oversight of the school, especially teacher attendance and punctuality. Respondents often describe teachers' absence from school or from the classroom, and poor instructional time use, as a result of poor monitoring by the head teacher. The school environment, particularly work relations with colleagues or students, the amount of work teachers are expected to complete while at school, and resources available to them, are additional factors that hinder teachers' attendance, especially their time on task, and whether they are present in the classroom or not. The next section explores challenges teachers experience in their daily lives that affect their attendance and instructional time use in the classroom.

I teach the students very well. I don't only teach them the education, but I also encourage them, teach them their tradition, tell them cultural stories. For instance, when supervisors come to our school, they interview the students and ask who of the teachers encourages them. They always choose me as the only teacher that encourages them, teaches them well and have a close relationship with them. It has happened that the supervisors sometimes come to me for feedback and encourage me to continue working like this. I believe this is a significant achievement personally.

– Teacher, Nugaal region, urban private school

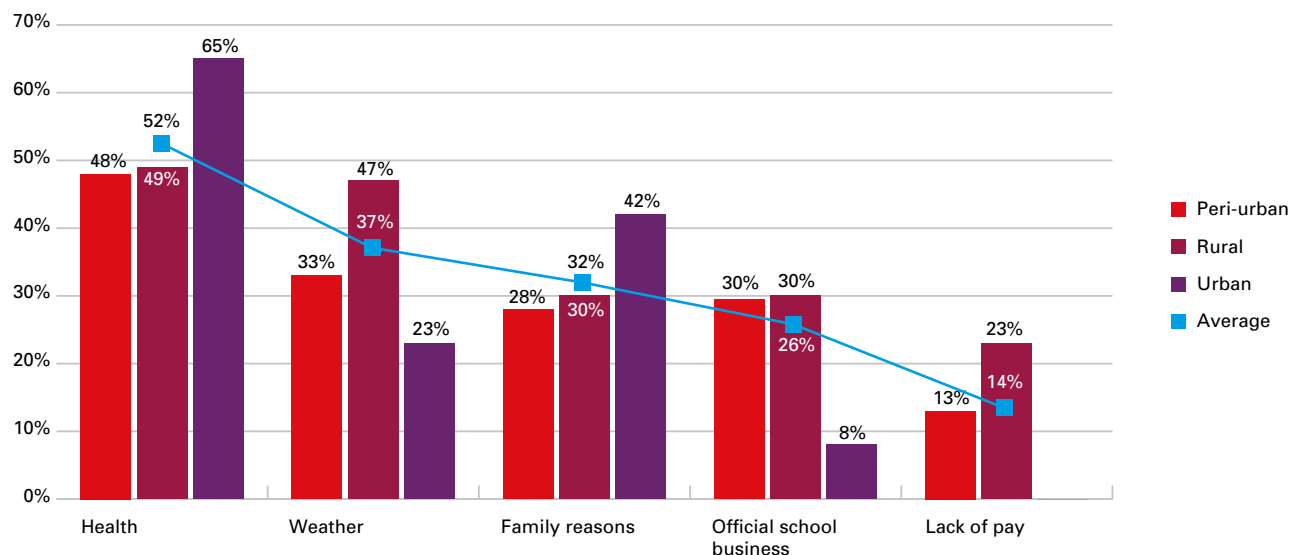
4.5. Teacher-level determinants of absenteeism

In the schools selected in this study, teachers often describe in detail their passion for teaching and how they consider schools to be places of great importance in the overall wellbeing and progress of the community. Many teachers describe that while they face daunting challenges at home and in school, they feel a sense of commitment towards their students. Such commitment is especially high among teachers who are from the regions they teach in. They describe feeling a sense of responsibility towards giving back to their communities, and often connect education as central to the development of their village and its people. For example, a teacher from a rural public school in Nugaal stated: "I feel happier here because I am basically from within this community. This is where my family lives and the people I am serving for are my people, my community." Several teachers also describe feeling a sense of obligation to ensure they are prepared to teach every day, since their students are dependent on them for their learning. While some teachers found daily motivation to attend to their students on time, there were factors making it difficult for them to do so. These include the teacher's health, their personal and social responsibilities, and the teacher's training and experience.

4.5.1. Teacher health

Health is the most significant factor preventing teachers from being regularly present in the school or in the classroom. Respondents from all 20 schools point to health as the main reason a teacher may be absent from school, or why they might dismiss class earlier and reduce the amount of time spent on teaching. The paper-based survey data also reveals health is a key factor in school absence for all teachers, but particularly for urban teachers, 65 per cent of whom selected this as the main reason they were not present in school, compared to 48 per cent per-urban and 49 per cent rural (see Figure 17).

Figure 17: Main reasons for school absence



Respondents consider health-related absences as “valid”, “natural”, “justifiable”, or “an exception” to absenteeism, and explain that such absences are considered authorized absences by the administration. This may be why almost all respondents, including those in supervising roles (head teachers, CEC members, and regional and district-level government officials) point to health as an obvious determinant of teacher absence. The most common outcome of health-related challenges is absence from school for multiple days. Representatives from the different educational levels all explain that health-related absences occur “regularly”, and in most schools account for at least one absence per week, or “multiple times” in a month.

Also, while head teachers often report frequently absent teachers to the CEC or other stakeholders, this does not seem to be the case with absences caused by illness. Though a head teacher is notified by the teacher if they were absent due to health, it appears there is no systematic process in place for following up on such leaves. Head teachers often follow up with a teacher when they do not show up to class or are absent for several days. There also does not seem to be a process in place to check the validity of a teacher’s absence for health reasons. A head teacher from a rural public school in Sanaag illustrates: “If the teacher says he had been sick, there is not much we can do to verify that he is telling the truth. There is no medical record, and the teacher can just go to the hospital and ask the doctor there to give him a medical prescription, and in most cases the doctor will give [it to] him. They might know each other, or are distant relatives, or something like that.” Likewise, a subnational-level respondent from Mudug raises concern that local education officials are not made aware of absent teachers until they visit schools and look through attendance sheets: “When I take my supervision visits to some schools, I notice that there are teachers recorded as absent in the school’s registration books. When I ask the head teacher about these absences, he tells me that the teacher had reported being sick and those are the number of days they were absent.”

I am a grade 8 student. When the teacher is not present in the class, the students feel that they missed their class schedule and they really dislike the absence of the teacher, despite the fact that teachers are often absent with reasonable matters like health-related situation.

– Student, Cayn region, rural public school

Although most respondents seemed to acknowledge health-related absenteeism was acceptable, they often did not provide explanations as to the nature of these illnesses. Some did however explain that age and hot weather conditions in the classroom were important factors contributing to illness, and therefore, leading to absence from school, early departures, or shortening of lesson durations. Older teachers were mentioned by some respondents as being sick more frequently than younger teachers, and often came to school late or left early. Similarly, the conditions of the classroom, especially over-crowdedness and heat, affect the health of both teachers and students, resulting in classes being dismissed earlier. A teacher from a rural community school in Mudug explains: “There are teachers who suffer from high blood pressure and they struggle to teach students in the classroom during the hot season.” These conditions sometimes cause teachers stress as they describe feeling the need to rush through their lessons in order to cover the contents of the lesson for the day. Sometimes teachers provide lessons even though they are not feeling well, and school managers appear to encourage this due to staff shortage. A head teacher from a rural community school in Nugaal highlights: “If a teacher feels ill, we often ask him to leave ... or stay at the class and not teach, because a teacher in the class but not teaching is much better than a classroom with students but without a teacher.”

The weather here is very hot and the school classrooms don’t have fans for air ventilation. As a result of hot temperature in the classrooms, it happens that we reduce teaching time in order for the students to feel better. We reduce the class period of 40 minutes to 30 minutes. We also consider the level of temperature in the classroom to avoid disease, as we know there are diseases that spread due to the hot temperature in the room with a lot of people in it.

– Teacher, Cayn region, peri-urban private school

4.5.2. Personal and social responsibilities

Along with health, teachers' personal and social responsibilities — including the health of his/her family members — are described by most respondents as a central reason for why teachers may be absent from school, not in the classroom, or shortening their time on task. Absences due to personal emergency, family health and social obligations are also viewed as valid reasons for school absence. This is largely since teachers provide for their families and look after their social and financial wellbeing. A teacher from an urban community school in the Bari region remarks: "The teacher is a father, a mother and a parent. I know that teachers have so many challenges and so many reasons to be absent — some personal and some family. I also know that teachers here maintain a high sense of responsibility and try their best to be punctual." Some personal reasons respondents pointed to as causing teachers to be absent from schools included marriages, birth of a child, illness or death of a family member, and participation in public engagements. Community representatives and some subnational officials also explained that addiction to a local drug stimulant, called khaat, caused teachers to arrive late to school in the morning.

It is always the female teachers who often come to school late. The reason for their lack of punctuality is always circumstantial, where she is maybe breastfeeding a child, or where she must leave home after house chores are completed and so on. Therefore, given their different circumstances, we often cope with it, but it is not very often.

– Head teacher, Nugaal region, rural community school

Several respondents suggest absenteeism affects female teachers and teachers of nomadic background more frequently than others, due to additional personal responsibilities in the home. Female teachers are described as absent or late to work due to their responsibilities as mothers and care-providers in the home in addition to teaching. A female teacher from a peri-urban public school in the Cayn region explains: "Being a mother, I have to spend time on house chores early in the morning, and then walk for an hour to school. It is very difficult and sometimes I ask myself if I can continue on like this. Then I remember my circumstances and keep doing it every day." Another female teacher from a rural community school in Mudug said she was absent from the school at least once a week because she attended to the needs of her children.

School administrations are aware of female teachers' absenteeism and consider it acceptable. Additionally, nomadic teachers are also described by some respondents as late or absent with more frequency

due to their nomadic lifestyle. They are regularly late in the morning because they look after their livestock before coming to school. Depending on the weather conditions, nomadic teachers sometimes miss school during the dry season in order to find water and food for their animals. Students at a peri-urban public school in Nugaal highlight: "Teachers are almost always at school. There are some teachers who have goats, and who sometimes take their goats out of town to graze. Teachers are sometimes sick, and other times are gone with their goats".

Finally, respondents point to stress affecting teachers, especially when they are in the classroom. This often makes it difficult for them to concentrate while at school or while they are teaching. A teacher from a peri-urban public school in Nugaal describes the impact of stress on their teaching: "Teachers are under a lot of physical and psychological pressure from all sides: family, headmaster and students. So many teachers are in a hurry sometimes and speed up class time or reduce the overall class period". Stress caused by delayed or inadequate salaries is viewed as especially problematic and as negatively affecting teachers' instructional time use and their overall presence in the school and in the classroom. Some teachers describe feeling immense pressure from their families to provide for them. Others explain that due to delayed salaries, they often miss school or arrive late because of poor motivation or because they are looking for someone to borrow money from. Alternative employment is another way the teachers attempt to make up for financial delays or insufficiencies. A teacher at a peri-urban public school in Nugaal states: "Seeking another job was for family reasons. You see, my salary is not enough to cover the needs of my family. I therefore have to seek other income-generating, part-time jobs." Having another job regularly causes teachers to be late as well as absent from their teaching jobs. They also are not able to prepare lessons or prepare for classes in advance as that time is often dedicated to the second employment. A CEC member from a peri-urban public school in Karkaar explains: "The Ministry used to provide teachers with incentives. But that has stopped. As a result, you see many teachers who, instead of preparing lessons or resting in their free time, engage in other income-generating opportunities, just to be able to provide for their families."

4.5.3. Teacher training and experience

Teacher training affects teachers' absenteeism in several different ways. First, as explored in the national-level determinants section, participation in teacher training programmes often causes teachers to be absent from school for one or more days. Usually the trainings are provided by the Ministry in a different town, requiring teachers to travel. Some respondents point to on-the-job training and seminars offered during school schedule, as causing teachers—and sometimes students—to be absent from class. The head teacher is described as regularly absent due to trainings. This usually results in the deputy head teacher being in charge for those days, and in some cases, the school being closed down completely until the head teacher returns from training. What is also apparent in the responses is that when head teachers or teachers are not at the school due to training workshops, they are not considered absent but rather as contributing to their work in a different capacity. A teacher at a rural public school in Sanaag illustrates: "Teachers are mostly present, apart from few times when they are busy on official school business, such as teacher trainings. So, when they are gone for training, I would not say teachers are absent."

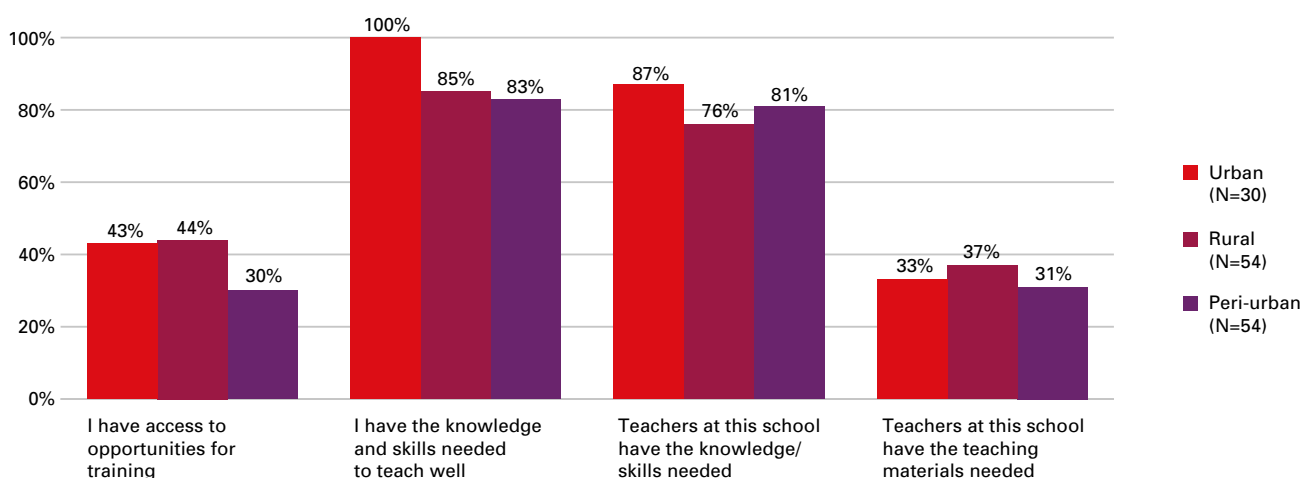
The way the teacher teaches or how skilful the teacher is at successfully carrying out his/her lesson influences how well his/her students will understand the lesson. Experience is also key. If the teacher has enough experience, he/she will likely be able to ensure that students are very much on top of their lessons.

– Teacher, Mudug region, rural private school

Training opportunities for teachers are generally not common, even though they are considered crucial by teachers, especially in strengthening their ability to remain on task and to arrive to school and the classroom more broadly. Those who are able to attend these programmes describe them as having immediate positive impact on their teaching methodologies. A teacher from a rural public school in the Cayn region for example, states: "My major achievement has been the number of training programmes I have attended. I have advanced my skills and knowledge throughout my experience as a teacher. I also receive respect and value within the community as I teach their children."

In the quantitative survey however, teachers describe their teaching knowledge and experience as positive and effective even though they lack access to in-service training opportunities. A vast majority of teachers across the different school locations point to limited TLMs at their school. Only 33 per cent of urban, 37 per cent of rural, and 31 per cent of peri-urban teachers have access to relevant TLMs. Likewise, only 43 per cent of urban, 44 per cent of rural and 30 per cent of peri-urban teachers agree with the statement that they have access to training opportunities. On the other hand, teachers across the different school types rate their knowledge and skills as significantly high, particularly urban teachers (100 per cent), followed by rural (83 per cent) and peri-urban teachers (83 per cent). These findings suggest that although there are severe constraints, teachers still rate their non-formal knowledge and skills as effective and relevant to their teaching (*see Figure 18*).

Figure 18: Teacher’s access to teaching and learning resources



It is possible that a teacher does not teach students while they are in the classroom. If the teacher is doing revisions and or checking exams, we cannot say that the teacher is doing nothing while in the class. Those activities are part of the teacher’s class schedule.

– Teacher, Cayn region, peri-urban public school

Lack of training is also considered a factor in how well teachers manage their students or organize their time in the classroom. Using class time to do revisions, repetition of previous days’ lessons, and marking examinations are common practices among many of the teachers interviewed for this study. There also seem to be some disagreements among respondents on whether class time can be used by teachers to carry on other activities instead of teaching scheduled lessons. A teacher from an urban public school in Karkaar for example, said his students often struggled with a previous day’s lesson and therefore he felt the need to review the lesson so his students could understand thoroughly: “When I go into class and want to give a lesson, and I find out that the students have not familiarized themselves well with the material I had given them the previous day, then my priority is not to give a new lesson.” Sometimes, teachers might spend too much time in one class and therefore arrive late to their next class — or delay another class from starting on time — or they might shorten their lesson durations due to insufficient training.

Summary

Teachers play a crucial role in the overall performance and success of students’ learning. While most teachers enjoy teaching and seeing their students perform well academically, they nonetheless face challenges that are described as beyond their control and which directly affect their punctuality. Mainly, their health, responsibilities towards their families, and training capacity are factors that cause them to be absent from the school or the classroom, or to remain on task. Some of these factors (such as training) are connected across the different governance levels (such as national level) and thus demonstrate the need to explore these challenges as connected and reinforcing.

Section 5: Bringing it all together: Understanding teacher absenteeism from a system's lens

The data collected from the 20 selected schools point to several challenges that disrupt teachers' presence in the classroom and school, their arrival and departure from school, and their instructional time use in the classroom. Section 1 presented an overview of the TTT research design, which, unlike previous approaches in the region towards teacher absenteeism, approached it as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. It focussed not only on absence from school or the classroom, but also when teachers arrived or left the school, and the amount of time they spent on teaching. An examination of Puntland's national development trends examined in Chapter 2 also revealed Puntland is currently experiencing a transition towards decentralization that the Government has weaved into its national strategic goals for education. It is not surprising therefore, to see that a number of these initiatives are newly developed, and their effects are yet to be fully realized. Section 2 also revealed Puntland state was still experiencing a variety of challenges due to its status as a newly emergent government. These were most notably financial constraints, poverty and a lack of essential policy needed in order for the sector to strengthen management and oversight of teachers' presence in school and in the classroom, along with their time on task.

Moreover, the analysis in Section 4 pointed to key challenges affecting teachers' attendance across the different levels. Although these challenges are examined individually across the different levels, findings indicate that determinants of teacher absenteeism are interconnected and, at times, reinforce or create new forms of absences across the different levels. The inconsistent and insufficient provision of salary, for instance, affects teachers' personal lives as they often cannot afford health care for themselves or their families. It also makes it difficult for head teachers and school inspectors to carry out their monitoring responsibilities, especially since it is the CEC that provides these funds to teachers. Likewise, a shortage of TLMs and school infrastructure impede the Ministry's goals of creating a national, harmonized curriculum across all regions, putting additional constraints on the state's efforts to use its limited resources effectively. These findings also suggest many of Puntland's challenges are connected to the state's broader status as a poor country facing various economic and political constraints. A possible outcome of these constraints includes the national Government's poor coordination and cooperation across the different ministries. Data from this study indicate not only a disconnect between these entities, but also a need for dependency.

The aim of this section, therefore, is to summarize some of the common threads across the key determinants of absenteeism presented in Section 4, with a focus on the interconnections between these, and how they may reinforce or enable new forms of absenteeism. These determinants are then examined in relation to Puntland's current educational trends and development initiatives in order to identify relevant policy and policy-implementation gaps that can be addressed in order to strengthen and expand initiatives that can enhance teacher attendance and instructional time use. Specifically, the following challenges are explored further below: insufficient TLMs and poor school infrastructure, lack of clarity on teacher monitoring and management responsibility, inadequacies in the provision of teachers' basic needs, teachers' workload, and the need for inter-ministerial coordination.

5.1. Lack of TLM and poor school and classroom resources cause teachers to shorten their instructional time and miss scheduled classes while at school.

Several teachers and head teachers interviewed for this study are aware the Ministry has developed TLMs, but they are not clear about why they have yet to received these. The CEC, DEO and REOs are also not able to support teachers in the provision of TLMs because they do not have the resources or awareness of the Ministry's distribution plans. Teachers across the 20 schools explained that they sometimes struggled to meet the required learning outcomes due to lack of TLMS. They often rely on a variety of other educational sources, causing worry among some that learners may not be able to achieve outcomes as mandated by the national curriculum and as required for national examinations. In rural and remote communities, where head teachers and teachers are less likely to have additional resources (internet, library), these concerns are notably acute. Moreover, focus-group interviews suggest that students who do not have required learning materials often struggle to keep up with their lessons or to attend schools regularly. This forces teachers to use class time for revisions or repetition of lessons instead of covering their scheme of work.

Schools selected in this study also appear to be in need of additional classroom facilities and infrastructure in the school in order to make the school environment more conducive to learning. Many classrooms do not provide protection to students against extreme weather conditions, or include essential resources (blackboards, age-appropriate desks/chairs, teaching aids), or spaces that support learners academically (library, sufficient classroom space, clean/functioning toilets, playground, school fence, or drinking water). These conditions impede a teacher's capacity to administer meaningful lessons or to use instructional time adequately, limiting students' potential for academic success. Not having adequate resources also makes it difficult for school inspectors and head teachers to reasonably assess and monitor teachers' instructional time use or teachers' absence from the classroom. Additionally, findings from this study reveal regional and district-level officials are often not able to provide support as required due to limitation of resources. This study also indicates that while the CEC provides schools with some infrastructure support, this is often minimal due to poverty and low financial capacity of families.

Findings point to several policy gaps and policy-implementation gaps related to inadequate TLMs and infrastructure. The Ministry has indicated it will distribute 10,000 textbooks annually during the span of ESSP2 (2017-2021). It has also specified that the printing of some subject texts (mainly math, science and Somali language) will be given priority. It does not, however, indicate a timeline or if additional measures will be undertaken in order to prioritize delivery based on needs, which this study suggests is an essential requirement. The Ministry appears to have prioritized allocation of additional resources to marginalized communities under Activity 2 of its access and equity goal. However, it does not indicate if these resources include TLMs or the refurbishing of classrooms and schools.

Moreover, in order for the ministry to implement a national benchmark for learners — through its proposed minimum standards framework — and ensure equitable access, there is a need to allocate resources through a needs-based approach that prioritizes under-resourced schools and communities. Short-term TLM solutions are especially important as they will enable teachers to carry out their responsibilities using resources that are relevant to national learning outcomes.

Finally, the provision of school infrastructure and classroom facilities appear to be of lesser significance to the Ministry at the moment than in previous years. In ESSP1 and the 2016-2017 Statistics Yearbook, documents highlight the importance of, for instance, equipping schools with necessary infrastructure. In ESSP2, however, the Ministry has limited its focus mainly on WASH infrastructure, stating that the provision of additional infrastructure may not be a factor in generating positive learning outcomes. Similar sentiments are found in Puntland's 2017-2019 national development plan, where educational infrastructure is described as contingent upon the establishment of national securitization and stability. Findings from this study contradict this notion, and instead reveal that school infrastructure and classroom facilities directly impede teachers' and learners' effectiveness in the classroom. Moreover, while security may be an important,

ongoing concern for Puntland, most respondents in this study do not consider it a barrier to their access to education. The Government, therefore, needs to reconsider its focus on school infrastructure so that immediate solutions can be provided that will enable teachers to remain on task and ensure learners keep up with required lessons.

5.2. Lack of clarity on teacher monitoring and management responsibility enables teachers to be frequently absent or to arrive late to school without fear of repercussions, to miss scheduled classes, or to reduce time spent on teaching.

The responsibility for supervising teachers' attendance and punctuality appears to be spread across the CEC, subnational educational officials and head teachers. As section 4 demonstrated, processes for monitoring and sanctioning teachers' attendance and instructional time use varied across schools and were often inconsistent and fragmentary. Moreover, while teachers appear to appreciate the monitoring authority of the DEOs/REOs, CEC and head teachers, they also found these processes overlapping and unclear, especially in terms of accountability as their salaries often were not provided by the Government or the school, but rather the CEC. Poor communication between school inspectors and teachers also isolated teachers from feeling a sense of responsibility in achieving national educational goals. These factors resulted in poor punctuality, notably the occurrences of teacher absence from school, their late arrival, and early departure.

Findings from this study also indicate some head teachers are uncertain about their responsibilities, especially as they find themselves limited in enforcing mechanisms to prevent regular absenteeism due to lack of support and clarity on the sanctioning procedures as mandated by the MoE&HE. This resulted in common occurrences of teachers taking extended leave for authorized purposes (sick leave), without any mechanisms for the head teacher to follow in order to limit or verify the validity of such leave. Head teachers also do not seem to have control over teachers' schedules while they are at school, due to regular requests for meetings or visits from various stakeholders, including government officials. Such interruptions are a common cause of disruptions during teaching times, and force teachers away from their classrooms while at the school.

There are several policy challenges linked to the lack of clarity on teacher monitoring and management responsibility. First, there do not seem to be any existing procedures in place for addressing teacher absenteeism, other than for cases of chronic absence, where teachers are absent without permission for multiple days. The Education Act includes warning, suspension and dismissal as some of the actions that can be taken by a disciplinary panel authorized by the minister. This panel, however, is not mentioned in the two strategic plans, nor the PEPP and was not known to many respondents in this study, though some subnational officials allude to its practice. A key challenge to implementing these actions appears to be related to its lack of clarity on what counts as 'chronic' absenteeism. In most instances, this seems to entail situations where teachers are absent repeatedly for significant periods of time. It does not include lateness, absence from the classroom, or time spent on task while in class.

Secondly, while ESSP1 does not mention absenteeism in Puntland schools, ESSP2 appears to be taking note of its potential to adversely affect the provision of education. As part of its policy priorities for education management and administration, the MoE&HE has dedicated Activity 6 to developing effective mechanisms that "monitor teacher absenteeism, corporal punishment, and other indicators of poor teaching practice across Puntland".⁷³ It plans to hand these responsibilities to communities and families, and considers their engagement important to ensuring accountability. REOs and DEOs on the other hand will provide overall management and oversight of schools. These plans, however, do not clarify the procedural duties of the head teacher in monitoring and sanctioning absence at their school. Since the Government has only previously acknowledged 'chronic absence', there is a need for the Ministry to develop processes that take into consideration additional forms of absences as highlighted in this study. This includes a concise

understanding of authorized and unauthorized absence that includes monitoring mechanisms reflective of Puntland's unique climatic and socio-economic reality.

Finally, there is a need for clarification regarding the specific role of each education level in the management and oversight of teachers. Currently, these responsibilities are shared between the CEC, subnational education officials and the head teacher. This causes confusion, especially for the teacher, who is often unclear who has the central authority to oversee their work, or to supervise and monitor their attendance. MoE&HE's focus on including the CEC and parents in observing teacher accountability is a positive step as this supports current practices across most schools selected in this study. There is still a need however, to provide clarification and to ensure these roles do not overlap but rather complement and reinforce one another.

5.3. Inadequacies in the provision of teachers' basic needs affect teachers' ability to be regularly present in the school or in the classroom and hinders their instructional time use while teaching.

Educational stakeholders across the different education system levels (subnational-level respondents, CECs, head teachers) describe insufficient remuneration as a factor directly affecting teachers' ability to arrive to school regularly or on time, and also causes stress, making it difficult for them to focus on their teaching while in class. This also forces teachers to look for alternative income-generating activities in order to sustain their basic needs. The lack of availability of cost-effective healthcare facilities worsens the wellbeing of teachers because they often cannot afford to travel far in order to secure more affordable health care. Furthermore, teachers throughout the different schools — and most notably in rural and remote schools — describe feeling stressed about not being able to provide for their families due to regular salary delays and insufficiencies. While many consider teaching a respectable job that allows them to have respect in the community, they nonetheless feel despair due to the high costs of living (especially electricity, water, and transportation) and lack of availability of additional resources (such as health benefits, housing).

Along with limited access to essential resources, teachers also find it difficult to carry out their teaching responsibilities due to inadequate in-service training. Many respondents consider lack of training as a key factor in why teachers struggle to use their class time effectively. This study revealed teachers lack important skills — including lesson preparation, classroom and time management — all of which limit their time on task and cause them to be late or absent from the classroom. When such opportunities become available from the Ministry or external partners, they are often limited or more easily accessible to teachers in urban areas, and less so in areas where they are needed most (rural, remote). Moreover, since trainings are available sparingly, some head teachers feel compelled to send teachers even though they do not have the resources to cover lessons in their absence. This pressure is especially heightened as the request for teachers comes directly from the educational authorities. Teachers also find it difficult to make up for lost teaching time due to the amount of information they are required to teach for each subject. Many respondents also point out that such absences create gaps in students' learning and limit their potential to progress academically.

Findings from this study point to gaps in existing policies related to remuneration and training as well as limitations in their implementation that directly impede teachers' punctuality and instructional effectiveness. The MoE&HE is heavily dependent on the CEC for the provision of teacher remuneration. In communities where parents are poor, however, students do not pay their tuition on time, which affects how much and how frequently teachers receive their pay. The Ministry has established an EMIS platform that will be utilized in the administering of teachers' salaries in the future when funds become available. They have also sought the help of international donors and increased the percentage of teachers on government payroll annually. Furthermore, there is some indication the Ministry wants to increase its commitment towards improving teachers' wages by lowering the cost of tuition through a direct-to-school grant-provision programme in the future.⁷⁴ While these are important initiatives, especially for the long-term improvement

of teachers' needs, there is a need for immediate response. The unsatisfactory financial situation affects teachers' ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle that can enrich their physical and mental wellbeing, and thus increases the possibility of these factors preventing them from being regularly present at the school, in their classroom or remaining on task.

Along with the need to improve the basic living conditions of teachers, access to in-service training opportunities requires additional support and resources. As noted in Section 2, most teachers in Puntland fall below national standards in subject knowledge⁷⁵, suggesting a need for additional preparation. This is especially vital as most teachers in Puntland also do not have access to recommended TLMs and therefore would require national-level commitment to support and guide them in the implementation of the national curriculum requirements. Findings from this study suggest most respondents do not have access to such opportunities, despite the Ministry's commitment to increase annually the number of in-service training opportunities (1,000 annually through 2017-2021), and to engage the support of external partners.

5.4. Teachers' heavy workloads due to non-teaching administrative responsibilities and students' health and behaviour in the classroom reduces the time they spend on teaching, and their overall presence in the classroom.

Additional work responsibilities keep teachers outside of the classroom or school for significant periods of time during the school year. The head teacher often authorizes or requests teachers to participate in additional activities that result in the teachers missing class or interrupting their lessons. The most frequent examples include administrative tasks in the school, and having to leave class to attend to meetings with stakeholders (including Ministry officials, members of the community, and other NGOs or INGOs). It is also common for head teachers to interrupt the teachers during lessons in order to follow up with a student regarding late tuition fees. These tasks force teachers to pause in the middle of their teaching, or to leave their classrooms so they can attend to visits from educational stakeholders (external organizations, Ministry officials, community members). Selected teachers describe feeling obligated to attend to these engagements and feel especially vulnerable if the requests are made by the head teacher. Findings also suggest educational stakeholders (REOs, DEOs, CEC members, as well as head teachers), do not seem to consider these practices as causing potential dilemmas for teachers to achieve their daily scheme of work.

Teachers also struggle to complete their instructional requirements or to remain in the classroom due to the poor health and participation of learners. Students regularly come to school sick or tired (from working to support their families), which distracts teachers from their time on task, and sometimes forces them to leave their classrooms so they can help a student in distress. Many students travel long distances to reach schools, often with little or no food, which makes it difficult for them to concentrate while in class. Others have learning needs that are not met in the classroom due to lack of instructional aids or additional facilities (including age-appropriate desks and chairs). Most schools included in this study do not provide feeding programmes, which can cause learners physical and mental distress. Additionally, students who do not complete their homework, due to lack of support or encouragement from parents, cause delays in teachers' time on task. The teachers therefore spend a great deal of scheduled class time helping students catch up by allowing them opportunities to complete their homework in class, or repeating lessons so those who were absent or not able to focus previously, can have further opportunity for achieving satisfactory levels of comprehension. They describe these situations as stressful and burdensome because they struggle to balance learners' personal needs with their official responsibility to cover a comprehensive scheme of work.

Policy gaps and policy-implementation gaps at the school, community and national level of the education system have direct implications for the amount of work teachers take on in addition to their teaching requirements. This subsequently limits their time on task and presence in the classroom. Schools do not seem to have mechanisms in place that take into consideration the relationship between non-teaching tasks

and their implications for teachers trying to focus on teaching requirements. Additionally, the workload of teachers is further exacerbated by low teacher-to-student ratios, creating additional challenges for teachers in managing students. Teachers' time on task, daily school and classroom attendance and overall punctuality are also hindered by the fact they are assigned subjects that they find difficult to manage with their skills and competence. Teachers' participation in non-teaching activities are often with the awareness and support of the head teacher, who frequently makes these requests, informally and sporadically throughout the school year. Teachers interviewed in this study did not seem to be aware how much of their time they should be dedicating to their teaching-related work and how much toward administrative tasks. There is, therefore, a need to establish policies clarifying teachers' roles, and procedures for carrying out additional work-related responsibilities in a way that does not interfere with their presence in the classroom or time on task. Finally, the Ministry's ongoing commitment to students' physical and social wellbeing in the school is evident in ESSP2, where additional feeding programmes and scholarship opportunities appear to be supporting children living in disadvantaged communities. These initiatives, however, were not present in the 20 schools selected for this study, including those that served very poor and marginalized communities. There is thus a need for the Ministry to increase its commitment to the wellbeing of children, specifically through the provision of increased feeding programmes, and by addressing community-level challenges that impinge on their positive engagement and learning in the school. Findings from this study suggest there is further need for collaboration of the Ministry (through their local and regional offices) and the school leadership, with the CEC, who has greater awareness and capacity to engage parents in supporting their child's physical and academic wellbeing.

5.5. Poor inter-ministerial collaboration and coordination makes it difficult for the MoE&HE to achieve long-term and sustainable solutions for the enhancement of teachers' time on task.

As a poor state that has only recently emerged from years of war, it is not surprising to see that Puntland falls behind in the development of infrastructure. Ongoing disputes with neighbouring states also cause uncertainty for Puntland as it continues to experience influx of refugees and IDPS, placing additional constraints on its already-limited resources. The challenges the education sector faces are thus a consequence of Puntland's overall socio-economic and political condition. The analysis in this section demonstrates the pervasiveness of teacher absenteeism and the interconnected and reinforcing role that the different systems of education play in this process. These findings also suggest these challenges are not limited entirely to the education sector, nor are they within its scope to redress entirely. Teachers who are absent due to poor health for instance, must travel to different regions in order to find affordable health care. Poor health of students, due to families' inability to provide nutrition, also make it difficult for teachers to carry on with their lessons. There is also a need to improve existing infrastructure of the community, for the government to provide additional resources (communication networks, utility provision, affordable living and social care), through coordination with other ministries, so that national development efforts support and reinforce one another. Extreme poverty and lack of employment opportunities for parents affect their capacity to pay school fees, which cause inadequacies or delays in teacher salary payments. It is difficult for the MoE&HE alone to ensure situations hindering teachers' and students' attendance and progress in the classroom are improved without the active support of other national government entities through consistent coordination and collaboration.

While there is a need for cross-sector engagement, the TTT study did not uncover any evidence of multi-sectoral collaboration or coordination, especially related to enhancing teacher attendance and instructional time use. The two strategic plans are also focused mainly on working within the educational system or coordinating with international donors so that the MoE&HE can mainly distribute aid effectively within the education sector. There is also some indication that national development efforts do not respond to the immediate needs of the education sector. This is evident in the 2017-2019 national development plan, which recognized the importance of the development of educational infrastructure, but only after national security is established. As noted above, findings from this study suggest security is not a significant factor when it

comes to teachers' or learners' daily educational experiences. Also, the analysis from this study suggests support from international organizations is vital but often short-term and focused on a specific education-level cause. The GPE's training project for example has provided vital support to enhancing the Ministry's capacity (i.e. EMIS), and ongoing training support for teachers. It does not, however, engage other sectors of the Government in order to develop long-term solutions for educational enhancement in Puntland.

Conclusion

The challenges summarized in this section reveal there are several determinants that are linked across different education-system levels, which hinder teachers' attendance and capacity to remain on task. This study suggests that often challenges at one level of the education system can produce new or exacerbate existing causes of teacher absenteeism at a different level. An examination of existing policy and policy-implementation gaps also indicates a need for further clarification of existing procedures, as well as the establishment of new ones so that Puntland can continue to further its commitment toward enhancing learning outcomes, access and equity, all of which require teachers to be actively engaged and present in the classroom. Such an endeavour, however, requires the inclusion of various stakeholders in order to ensure there is consistency and accountability across the entire education system. This is especially important as Puntland continues to implement its national decentralization efforts and increases its focus on strengthening local ownership of education. The next section presents policy recommendations that can support this process and ensure that those who are in an ideal position to assist can provide the support needed to enable and empower teachers so they can effectively fulfil their teaching responsibilities.

Section 6: Policy recommendations

In the previous section, a discussion of the key challenges that directly or indirectly result in teacher absenteeism, demonstrated the interconnected and reinforcing nature of these constraints. Also, an analysis of existing policy gaps and policy-implementation gaps reveal that while Puntland has begun to prioritize the negative impact of teachers' punctuality on the progress of students' learning, and has established some key initiatives toward achieving this aim, there is still a need for further enhancement. This section presents policy recommendations that address the key findings summarized in Section 5.

6.1. Schools need to be provided with official TLMs and essential classroom and school infrastructure so teachers can carry out their teaching duties as required, to be present in class, and on task.

- a. Most teachers in this study found it difficult to carry out their responsibilities without the provision of the new TLMs. They described feeling discontent when local government officials were not able to provide support. Findings also reveal the problem is especially pervasive in schools located in rural areas or those that are in impoverished communities. The Ministry's efforts to provide textbooks needs to be led by DEOs in close collaboration with the Quality Assurance and Standards Department, who are responsible for the implementation of curriculum. DEOs are in an ideal position to fulfil the Ministry's priority of targeting marginalized communities⁷⁶, since they are regularly engaged and aware of the challenges schools in their districts encounter. This is especially important as DEOs will also be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the proposed minimum standards framework.
- b. The Director-General's office should consider securing additional support from international partners^{vi}, in the provision of temporary teaching kits (derived from the new curriculum) so that teachers have short-term solutions while waiting for national TLM distribution. Teachers in this study described positively similar kits distributed by UNICEF in the past, and considered them an important contribution of the Ministry towards the enhancement of teachers' time on task. These kits will also provide immediate and cost-effective solutions to the Ministry's goal of national curriculum quality and harmonization, and they will limit teachers' need to use additional resources not in line with national standards.
- c. Regional and district-level education officials should ensure priority is given to marginalized schools in the provision of WASH facilities, as promised by the Ministry. Findings from this study suggest teachers struggle to teach learners who are distressed due to lack of access to clean water or functioning toilets. Additionally, since the aim of WASH facilities is to provide learners with an environment conducive to learning, regional officials should advocate for additional classroom and school infrastructure so learners are protected against extreme weather conditions, feel safe at school, and have a space for physical and learning activities. While these will require additional finances, they are a necessity in order to make the school a learning-friendly environment.

vi These can include the European Union and USAID, as both organizations have indicated additional support and commitment towards the development of education in Somalia.

6.2. A more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of teacher absenteeism is needed, along with clearer processes for its monitoring and management so sanctioning responses are transparent and consistent across all schools.

- a. The Policy and Planning department in the Ministry should develop a comprehensive definition of teacher absence so that it includes additional forms of absences, as highlighted in this study (arriving to school late or early, missing scheduled lessons, and effective instructional time use). Along with this definition, the department should include clear procedures that can be followed at the school level in order to sanction frequent absences. This definition and the accompanying sanctioning procedures need to be incorporated into national education documents (ESSP, teacher training and recruitment guidelines), for consistency.
- b. Regional and district-level officials and the Human Resource Department need to work collaboratively to ensure these policies are adhered to and that they can be used effectively to deter teachers away from absenteeism. Some of these steps should include:
 - Engaging GTEC and PIE so that in-service and pre-service teachers are aware of what the expectations are
 - Supporting head teachers in making weekly meetings mandatory and using these to follow up on teacher attendance and to also develop school-specific strategies to strengthen punctuality. Some of these strategies can include developing a work plan that takes into consideration challenges the school faces (such as weather conditions).
 - Requiring teachers to submit lesson plans to their head teacher on a weekly basis. This will provide head teachers with information about a teacher's instructional time use in the classroom
 - Coordinating with the CEC to support the head teacher so they have the confidence and authority to manage and support teachers. This may require additional resources for the head teacher, but these are needed in order for the head teacher to be able to reward teachers. Such recognition is a common cause of motivation and dedication among teachers interviewed for this study.

6.3. In order to ensure teachers' basic needs do not cause absenteeism, the Ministry needs to consider the provision of additional resources and a revision of its existing training practices.

- a. Through the Administration and Finance Department, additional financial resources for teachers' personal needs should be allocated at the national level and disseminated through the regional and district-level offices to the CEC. Findings from this study point to poor living standards as directly affecting teacher attendance and time spent on teaching. The situation is especially dire in schools where teachers do not receive adequate or consistent salary. These funds can be included as part of the Ministry's second priority goal in ESSP2, which focuses on improving achievement of learning outcomes. These measures can be introduced as a temporary solution while the Ministry continues to secure long-term solutions for adequate teacher remuneration. Additionally, as there is no national or standardized primary teacher payment scheme, it is suggested that MoE&He establish one as part of its long-term commitment. This will address disparities in terms of teachers' remuneration through a harmonized salary system. Establishing an incentive scheme will also set minimum wage for the teachers, and therefore provide motivation to those teachers who are currently earning below the established minimum. This system also carries with it advantages, including job evaluation, thus providing better remuneration packages for teachers who take on additional responsibilities or who have been teaching for a long time.

- b. The GTE and PIE centres need to provide training opportunities at a time that does not conflict with teaching time. This requires close collaboration with regional and district-level officials, who must ensure training opportunities are provided outside of scheduled teaching times. The support of and supervision by the Director-General is also needed so implementation is consistent and thorough. Findings from this study suggest this is not always the case. The selection of teachers also needs to be in collaboration with the head teachers, in order to ensure training opportunities meet the needs of the individual school. The GTE and PIE should also consider developing a model for training that is similar to the GPE's tailor-made, in-service, teacher-training programme. This will ensure that training times do not cause teachers to miss teaching and that the content of the trainings reflect the needs and realities of teachers' working environments.

6.4. There is a need to clarify teachers' official roles and responsibilities so they are not losing time on task due to non-teaching obligations.

- a. There is a practical understanding among many educational stakeholders that teachers who are at school can engage in administrative tasks during scheduled class time. A definition of the official duties and responsibilities of teachers is needed so that time on task is prioritized over engagement in other school-related activities. The code-of-conduct document is an important place to include this definition because it is accessible and used by most teachers and head teachers. This requires the support of the national Government (REOs, DEOs), the CEC and school leadership since it is often these stakeholders who require teachers to carry on additional tasks. The DEOs, in particular, need to support the implementation of this code as part of their school inspection visits. It also requires the Human Resource Department of the Ministry to provide additional administrative staff. While this may seem costly, it is an important approach to consider if the Ministry wants to achieve its education enhancement goals, as this step will contribute significantly towards teachers' capacity to be present in the classroom and to provide regular instruction to learners.
- b. Teachers' time on task is also affected by the performance of the student, who often struggles in class due to hunger or lack of support from home. Findings from this study suggest that most schools do not have adequate nutrition programmes for learners. In ESSP2, as part of access and equity priority, Activity 2 is dedicated towards the provision of feeding programmes which will be provided by WFP using a needs-based approach. It is crucial that the CEC take the lead on the implementation of these efforts as they are often directly engaged in working both with schools and communities to enhance learners' experiences. Priority must be given to schools in socio-economically vulnerable contexts as these were previously not targeted by the WFP, which may explain why many such schools in this study were in acute need of such provisions.

6.5. The Government of Puntland must advocate for inter-ministerial collaboration and coordination so the Ministry of Education can address determinants of teacher absenteeism holistically and meticulously.

In order for the Ministry to make effective changes and to provide clearer mechanisms for monitoring and managing absenteeism, it needs the support and engagement of other ministerial sectors. The Ministry's leadership should consider working with its regional offices in order to establish a list of priorities for national collaboration and see where support is needed from other ministries. This will allow the Ministry to work vertically within its own leadership, as well as horizontally across others. The provision of basic social and economic care at the district level will ensure that essential resources are present, especially in areas where there is an extreme lack. Emergency responses from international organizations need to take the education sector into consideration in prioritizing their efforts. This may require the inclusion of different levels of the education system so that resources and efforts are utilized effectively and efficiently, without duplication of efforts. It will also ensure the provision of services is based on needs. The Government of Puntland will benefit from such an approach because it will ensure their efforts are effective, consistent and not duplicated or contradicted. Also, since the Ministry is committed to enhancing a qualified teaching workforce in schools, it is important that it disseminate recruitment guidelines for implementation in order to strengthen compliance, which can be enforced through ministerial monitoring.

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